

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1887.

LADY GRACE.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER IX.

MISS DYNEVOR AND THE GIRLS.

IT was not an ordinary match ; it was something quite out of the common way ; but Mary Dynevor was a girl out of the common way also. Not, however, as regarded beauty : in that respect she could not compete with her sister, Grace, or with her brilliant friend, Gertrude Baumgarten. She was a lady-like girl, with a pale serene face, very much like that of her sister, Cyrilla, whose love had been blighted ; her hair was of a rich brown, her eyes were violet blue ; she was quiet in manner, and calm in speech. That was the best that could be said of her, and yet it was certain that some unusual charm did attach itself to Mary Dynevor.

In the past year, when abroad with Lady Grace Baumgarten, Mary had made the acquaintance of Everard Wilmot, an attaché to one of the Continental embassies, and the son of Sir John Wilmot. Exceedingly to her own surprise, he had asked her to become his wife. In the impulse of the moment she went, letter in hand—for he had made the offer in writing—to Lady Grace.

"What am I to do?" she asked.

"What a fortunate girl you are!" exclaimed Lady Grace, when she had digested its contents. "He is the eldest son, you know, and old Sir John's worth twenty thousand a year, if he's worth a shilling. What news for your father!"

"Then you think that—I—should—accept him?" repeated Mary Dynevor.

"Accept him!" retorted Lady Grace: "why, what else would you do?"

"I don't know. I don't particularly care for him."

"What a strange girl you are! You do not like anyone else, I conclude?"

"Oh dear, no," returned Mary; "what an idea!" But the idea

had served to bring up the deepest and most confusing blushes to her face. They looked a little suggestive to Lady Grace Baumgarten.

"But—before accepting an offer of this kind, I thought it was necessary—or usual—to—to ——" Mary broke down.

Lady Grace burst into a merry laugh. "You thought it was necessary first of all to fall in love. I see. Well, it is sometimes done, Mary; but it is not absolutely essential. My opinion was that something was impending, for Everard has been here much."

"But I never imagined he came for me."

"Oh, indeed!" said Lady Grace, not choosing to say that she herself had never imagined it either. "For whom, then, did you think he came?"

Another accession of colour, and a slightly evasive tone. "Not for anyone—of course; I had no definite thoughts upon the subject."

"One word, Mary. Do you dislike Mr. Wilmot?"

"I like him very much; and I esteem him greatly."

"And yet you come to me, and demurely say, 'What am I to do?' Go away with you, you shy, foolish girl."

So Mary accepted Mr. Wilmot. Nevertheless, she felt half conscious that if she had had the courage to search out the hidden secrets of her heart, it might have told her that her love was given to Charles Baumgarten.

Some few years had elapsed since the sudden death of the Dean of Denham. It was a terrible shock, that, to his wife and children. His affairs were arranged by the help of Lord Avon; Cyras and Charles both doing also something towards it. A small sum of money, left to the boys by a relative, but of which the Dean had enjoyed the interest for his life, they had at once sacrificed. Cyras had returned to New Zealand. He was still in the same shipping house there, Brice and Jansen's, and held a good position in it now. He had not visited England a second time, but wrote occasionally. Sometimes his letters would contain a pretty-looking little cheque for Charles or for Gertrude.

Charles had done well at Oxford; had taken honours and gained his fellowship. He was called to the Bar, and lived at his chambers in Pump Court for economy's sake; now and then staying for a few days with his mother in Berkeley Square, Lady Grace's residence. Her income was small. She had only two thousand a year of her own, which would go to Charles and Gertrude in equal shares at her death; but Lord Avon considerably augmented it. He had been a good brother to her. Charles hoped to get on well in his profession in time, and had taken to go circuit; this would be his second year of it.

It was February by the calendar. Judging by the wind, one might have called it March, for dust whirled in the streets, and windows rattled. But Miss Dynevor's drawing-room in Eaton Place was cheerful with its fire and wax lights. Dr. Dynevor was rather in the habit of calling it "My town house" when speaking of it, but it was his

sister's and not his. His name was really Maude-Dynevor, though he was rarely called by it. Some people dropped the one name and some dropped the other. His wife's family name was Maude, and when he married her he had had to take it in addition to his own.

When Dr. Baumgarten was made Dean of Denham, Dr. Maude-Dynevor was one of the prebendaries of the same cathedral. The word "prebend," or "prebendary," was then almost universally used for the higher cathedral dignitaries: "canon" rarely. Two or three years later, Dr. Dynevor was made prebendary of Oldchurch, and quitted Denham. He was at Oldchurch still, its sub-dean. He had a large family of boys and girls, and ruled them with an iron hand. He was a dark, stern, ugly man, who walked with his head thrown back in haughty pomposity, and his perky nose turned up to the air. Caroline, his second daughter, had married a man very much older than herself, Colonel Sir Thomas Hume, and was in India; but the Doctor had four daughters on his hands still. The eldest of them, Cyrilla, rarely came to town.

Perhaps, though, it may be said that they were on Miss Dynevor's hands, rather than on his. She had all the trouble of them. Since Mrs. Maude-Dynevor's death some years back, his sister had taken much charge of them. Occasionally she was with them at Oldchurch, more frequently they were with her in London. The girls were not at all grateful. Ann Esther Dynevor was rather eccentric and wore a flaxen wig, and her nieces took advantage of her peculiarities to tease her. She was a rich woman and very generous to them.

When Lady Grace Baumgarten returned from her visit to the Continent in the past October, and resigned his daughter Mary into Dr. Dynevor's charge—he had travelled from Oldchurch to Eaton Place to receive her—and laid before him Mr. Wilmot's very handsome proposals, the Sub-dean was intensely gratified, and expressed obligation and satisfaction to Lady Grace. Mary and her sisters, Regina and Grace, had remained that winter with their aunt. With February changes had come. Sir John Wilmot was dead, Sir Everard was on his road home, and Doctor Dynevor came up from Oldchurch, and was in Eaton Place. According to the Sub-dean's computation, Wilmot might be in London now. He was anxious to see his future son-in-law. In his private opinion he set him down as a milksop. Who else, with a title and good rent-roll, would have been attracted by Mary, a quiet, pale girl with nothing in her? The Canon was not complimentary to his daughters, either in public or private, and was given to underrate their merits.

Dinner was over and all were in the drawing-room except the Sub-dean. He was fond of his port wine, and did not quit the table with the young and frivolous. On one of the large old-fashioned sofas sat Miss Dynevor in her flaxen wig; her head had drooped on to the sofa pillow and she was fast asleep. On another sofa sat the three girls in a half-circle; and, perched on one of its arms was their brother

Richard ; on the other arm sat the young man who had dined with them.

This was Charles Baumgarten. Nearly six-and-twenty years of age, not very tall, but stately and handsome, he was the very image of what his father had been as a young man ; not resembling his sister Gertrude, not resembling his mother, Lady Grace ; only his dead father. Richard Dynevor was little and insignificant.

The Sub-dean's sons were the plague of his life. Not that they were worse than other sons, but there were several of them to get on in life, and the Dean was poor ; and to supply their wants was often an inconvenience to him. Richard was studying for the Bar ; but was not yet called to it. He had wanted to go into the Church ; but the Sub-dean had two sons in it, or going into it, and would not put in a third.

"Isn't it a shame !" suddenly exclaimed Regina Dynevor in the subdued tone they had adopted for their conversation. "She says her limbs are getting bad again, and that she can't chaperon us to-morrow night !"

"Regina !" interposed Grace, in a tone of sharp reproof ; although Regina was the eldest, and she was the youngest.

"I declare that she said it," returned Regina, the whole party having imperceptibly glanced at the opposite sofa, so that there could be no mistaking who was alluded to. "We were in her dressing room, just before dinner. 'My limbs are getting bad again : ' those were the very words she used."

"Very possibly : but there was no necessity for you to repeat them. We are not alone."

"We are," said Regina. "Who's Charley Baumgarten ? Nobody."

"Nobody, as you say," interposed Charles.

"Regina's tongue will be the bane of her life," cried Grace. "Of course we are used to Charley, but it would have been all the same, had there been a roomful of strangers present. She says anything that comes uppermost in her mind."

"Like papa," carelessly spoke Regina.

"Yes ; but what is proper for papa is unladylike for you," returned Grace, who liked to set the world to rights.

"Go on, Gracie," laughed Richard ; "keep them in order. What else did Aunt Ann say ?"

"Nothing. I hope it's not true, though, that she is going to be ill. We shall all be kept prisoners, as we were last season."

"I'd rather run away than put up with it," protested Regina, fiercely.

"It's not rheumatism but temper from which she is suffering."

Charles Baumgarten laughed.

"It is quite true, Charley : even you don't know her yet. I protest that it was half and half last year : a little rheumatism, and a great deal of cross-grained fractiousness. If she does have this attack, mind, I shall have brought it on."

"You ! what next, Regina ?"

"Little Archdeacon Duck called this morning ——"

"Archdeacon Duck—who is he ?" interrupted Charles Baumgarten.

"It's the girls' name for him; she means Archdeacon Drake," explained Richard. "Let her go on, Charley."

"Well," said Regina, "you all know how Aunt Ann has been setting her cap at him, thinking, perhaps, he might convert her into Mrs. Duck the second. The little Archdeacon was beginning with his foolishly complimentary speeches—it's my belief, he learns them by heart, and says them to every woman he meets—and brought in something about aunt's 'locks, of which the weather, windy or wet, never disturbed the beauty.' 'Or if it does,' I put in, 'Aunt Ann Esther can send them to the hairdresser to be renewed: she is more fortunate than we poor young damsels.'"

"Regina ! you never said it !"

"Indeed I did. She looked daggers, and the Archdeacon looked foolish. There's nothing she hates so much, either, as being called Ann Esther. I was determined to pay her off," avowed Regina; "she had driven me wild all the morning with her aggravations. And now I expect she intends to pay us off, by having an attack of rheumatism."

"A blessed thing for you girls if you were married and away," said Richard cynically; "but you'll never find another Aunt Ann. I don't know where I should be for pocket money without her. I say, girls, I think Wilmot has landed."

"Then, if so, he'll be here to-night," said Regina. "And Mary is as cool over it as a cucumber ! One would think ——"

The Sub-dean entered. Regina cut short her speech, and Charles Baumgarten slipped off his perch on the sofa, and took his seat decently in a chair. In the presence of Dr. Dynevor, his family put on their best behaviour. He walked up to the fire, and stood with his back to it, his shoe buckles glittering in the wax-lights. A dead silence had fallen in the room; Miss Dynevor dozed on, and in the midst of it the arrival of a visitor was heard.

Whether they felt who it might be, cannot be told: the silence of expectation was on all, and their eyes turned to the door as it was thrown open.

"Sir Everard Wilmot."

Dr. Dynevor and his buckles bustled forward with his right hand stretched out. He had pictured to himself a foolish young man, with an insipient moustache and an eye-glass: he saw before him a right noble-looking form, with a noble face, a man who had left thirty years behind him. Miss Dynevor tumbled upright in consternation, and pushed up her flaxen curls too high in her flurry.

A warm greeting to the Sub-dean, a quiet greeting to Mary, holding her hand for a moment only, an introduction to the rest of the party, including Charles Baumgarten, and then Sir Everard sat down.

"Look at Mary," whispered Richard to his sister Regina. "Is she fainting?"

Regina started up and turned to her. Mary's whole frame was shivering, and her face had turned of a deathlike whiteness. But she was not fainting.

"It will be over in a moment," she murmured to Regina. "Don't notice me, for the love of Heaven! Talk to them: do anything: stand before me: draw attention from me." And soon the colour came into her face again.

"Catch me turning sick and faint for the dearest lover that ever stepped!" thought Regina, as she began clattering the teacups on the table, sharply inquired how her aunt's legs felt now, and pushed Charles Baumgarten towards the bell-rope, telling him to ring for the urn. All with the good intention of keeping observation from Mary.

"Perhaps you would prefer coffee, Sir Everard?"

He smiled. "I should prefer tea. I long to fall into the good old English customs again. A traveller on the sandy desert never longed for the sight of water more than I have, these many months, longed for home."

"Then why didn't you come to it?" sensibly questioned Regina.

"First of all, I could not be spared, and was forced to remain at my post," replied Sir Everard. "Secondly, my father was with me, and he believed England would not be the proper climate for his declining health. We all have to bow to circumstances, you know, Miss Dynevor."

"Very disagreeable circumstances, too, sometimes," returned the young lady. "But, Sir Everard, I am not Miss Dynevor, and you will incur my aunt's everlasting displeasure if you accord me the honour of the title. She is Miss Dynevor—at present—and I am Miss Regina."

There was a shade of malice and so much point in Regina's last sentence that some of them smothered a titter. Sir Everard turned to Miss Dynevor, and entered into conversation with her, with marked courtesy.

"Dear Aunt Ann is a great sufferer," cried Regina. "She has rheumatism in her legs."

"A pity but that you had it in your tongue," returned Miss Dynevor, provoked into a retort: and Dr. Dynevor wheeled round and stared in anger at his daughter Regina.

"So you are getting tired of a Continental life," he observed to Sir Everard. "I never was abroad: don't know what it is like over there."

"We get tired in time of all things but home, sir. I hope never to go abroad again—except for a temporary sojourn."

"Mary came home enraptured with Germany," exclaimed Grace Dynevor. "To hear her account of it, we thought she could only have alighted in some terrestrial paradise."

Sir Everard glanced at Mary, and half smiled. A sudden flush suffused her white face, and she looked terribly embarrassed.

After tea they dispersed about the two rooms, which opened to each other. One of the girls sat down to the piano, the others gathered round it, leaving the Sub-dean and Sir Everard alone, standing on the hearth-rug.

"My daughters delight in having a little fling at their aunt, especially Regina," he began, confidentially, as if he deemed their behaviour needed an apology. "Ann keeps them rather strictly, and they rebel against it. Richard, too, and Charley Baumgarten help to keep up the ball against her, I fancy."

"He is the son of Lady Grace, I presume?"

"Her son, and her idol."

"He is a fine young man; has a particularly nice countenance."

"I don't know that countenances go for much," remarked the Reverend Doctor. "Charles has something in him, and is steady as Old Time. He did well at College, and gained his fellowship."

"Does he follow a profession?" inquired Sir Everard. "Lady Grace used to talk to me about him, but I really have forgotten details."

"I don't know how he would expect to get on in the world without a profession. Dean Baumgarten died worse than poor, as you may have heard. Charles is called to the Bar, and is already getting into some practice."

"There's an elder son, is there not?"

"Of the Dean's, yes; not of Lady Grace's. The Dean was married twice. Cyrus lives at Wellington, in New Zealand; he has not been in England for years."

"Cyras!" exclaimed Sir Everard with emphasis. "Is that his name? And he lives, you say, at Wellington? Is he in a shipping-house there—Brice and Jansen's?"

"I believe that is the firm," replied the Sub-dean haughtily, who would have thought it beneath him to know well the name of any-one in trade.

"Then I must have made a passing acquaintance with him when I was at Wellington two or three years ago," remarked Sir Everard. "But I thought his name was Brice. I am sure he called Mr. Brice uncle."

"Not unlikely: they are connected in some way. But his name is Cyrus Baumgarten."

Sir Everard strolled towards the other room. Mary sat on a sofa, apparently lost in thought, and Charles Baumgarten stood underneath the chandelier, with an open book. Sir Everard sat down by Mary.

"It has been a long separation, Mary," he whispered. "Did you think I was never coming?"

"Yes, it has been long," she faintly said. Her hands were trembling, her heart was beating; she spoke—and looked—as if she were frightened.

"But from no fault of mine," he returned. "Had you permitted a regular correspondence, you would have known this."

"My aunt said it was more proper not to correspond—except by an occasional letter at stated seasons. I explained this to you after I returned."

A smile passed across Sir Everard's face. "I am aware—I remember; and I dare say it has all been very 'proper,' if not affectionate. But the past is over and gone, Mary, and now we need fear no further——"

He did not say what. A hasty glance had shown him that no one was looking. Charles Baumgarten, buried in his book, stood with his back towards them: the rest were round the piano, singing. He bent his face down to Mary's and his lips touched her cheek.

"Oh, don't! don't!" she shrinkingly uttered.

"Nay, my dearest, would you deny it to me? It is a reward long waited for."

She gasped for breath as she stood up and caught the corner of the mantelpiece. Her face had turned painfully white again.

The song over, the conversation became general, and presently Sir Everard rose to leave.

"Will you tell Lady Grace, with my kind regards, that I anticipate the pleasure of seeing her to-morrow?" said Sir Everard to Charles, as he held out his hand.

Charles did not choose to see the hand; and he replied coldly and stiffly. "I do not reside with Lady Grace, and shall not be likely to meet her to-night or to-morrow."

"He has his mother's pride," thought Sir Everard. But Sir Everard was mistaken.

Mary slipped out of the room afterwards, and she had not returned to it when Charles said good-night.

As he passed a small parlour, on his way out, usually devoted to the studies and pursuits of the young ladies, Charles's ear caught the sound of something very like a sob. He halted and looked in. There were no candles in the room, but the fire was blazing away, and in its light stood Mary. He went in and shut the door behind him. She smoothed the traces of tears from her face, but could not hide its ghastly look. Charles turned white also, and confronted her upon the old, worn hearthrug.

"The time for concealment has passed, Mary, as it seems to me," he began. "We have gone on, like two children, making believe to hide things from one another. This is the awaking! What is to be done? You cannot enact a lie, and marry that man!"

"Oh, Charles! what are you saying?" she uttered, in a wailing tone. He stood quite still for a moment, looking at her. "Do you wish to marry him?"

"I would rather die."

"Yes, for you love me—nay, don't I tell you the time for

concealment is over, and this night is the awaking. You love me—and oh, my darling! how I love you, I cannot stay now to tell. Nor need I: for you have known it without my telling you.”

“I am terrified,” she whispered. “I am nearly terrified to death at the thought of what is before me. Think of the wrong I have done to him!”

“And I think of my position, my poverty,” returned Charles Baumgarten. “If I spoke to your father he would turn me out of the house and keep me out of it. We have just gone on, living in a fool’s paradise, Mary, shutting our eyes to the future, I shutting mine to honour.”

“Not a word must be breathed to my father,” she whispered, eagerly.

“Would you marry Everard Wilmot?” sharply cried Charles Baumgarten. “But that I forced control upon myself with an iron will, I should have struck him when he kissed you to-night.”

She cried out with pain. “You saw it, then?”

“Saw it! I felt it. Felt it as if it had been a sharp steel, piercing my heart. Oh, the curse of poverty! I seem to be helpless in the matter. Mary, I can only trust in you.”

“A dim idea came over me, while I sat with him on the sofa, of speaking to him,” she said, in a tone of abstraction. “But I don’t know how I could do it. He is so good a man, so honourable, so kindly; one of those men you may trust. I wish he had never taken it in his head to ask me to marry him! I wish I had followed my own impulse at the time—and declined him.”

“Why did you not do so?” he returned.

“I had not the courage: and I—did not care for you so much then as I do now,” she whispered.

“We have nearly our whole lives before us, Mary, and they must not be sacrificed to misery,” he urged. “Mary, you must wait for me: I know I shall get on.”

“Leave me to think it over for to-night,” she answered. “I must try and see what ought to be done—and do it.”

“That will not do,” he impetuously said. “If you put it upon ‘duty’ and that sort of thing, you will marry him.”

“Charles!” It was her turn to reprove now. “I said I would try and see what I ought to do, meaning my duty, neither more nor less. It is not my duty to marry where I do not love.”

“Mary, I beg your pardon. All this has driven me half out of my mind.”

“Leave me now,” she repeated. “Indeed, I tremble lest any of them should come and find you here. Good-night.”

He put his arm round her to kiss her: but she started away.

“Charles! at present, remember, I am engaged to *him*.”

It was of no use. “I must take away the one that he left,” whispered Charles Baumgarten.

(To be continued.)

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

In Memoriam.

I.

IT has been the fate of many great works to be rejected in the first instance by the publishers. Not until one amongst them has discerned the vein of gold beneath the new and unknown surface have they been brought to light.

An old saying tells us that we can only understand Shakespeare by the Shakespeare that is within us. Genius must be original, and for this reason is often slowly recognised. The tendency of the human mind is conservative. A new departure is looked upon with suspicion. The unfamiliar seldom pleases. The new and the strange can never charm as did the old. We love our old haunts and associations. Man returns to the scenes and loves of his boyhood with more delight and longing the farther this period of life recedes into the past. For those were the days of first and vivid impressions. The mere delight of existence was sufficient; the full warmth of sunshine that as yet cast no shadow; the looking out upon a world, and behold everything was beautiful and good.

This dislike to the new and the unfamiliar has no doubt been a reason why many a work of genius has been so slowly recognised. Sometimes, indeed, only after death has its author received due appreciation. It has been the case in all branches of art: literature, painting, music, science, all have equally suffered at times.

The saddest thought is that of a great genius, with all its cravings for recognition, singing its song to soulless ears and going out of the world unhonoured and unknown. The tardy recognition can never make atonement; the pain of a past silence, deep as the soul within, can never be lifted.

How often one has longed to bring them back to earth, crown their brow with laurels, heap the glories of the world upon them and its riches; for want of which they have sometimes perished; raise them on a pedestal far above all ordinary humanity. But in vain.

"Can honour's name provoke the silent dust,
Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death?"

II.

EVERYONE knows the story of *Fane Eyre*, which went the round of the publishers and met only with rejection until it fell into the hands of Mr. Williams, who sat up all night to read it. *East Lynne* did not go the same round as *Fane Eyre*, yet it might have done so but for the late Mr. Richard Bentley's judgment in the matter.

It was first offered to Messrs. Chapman and Hall, as the publishers of the magazine in which *East Lynne* first appeared : and also because Mrs. Henry Wood had a slight and pleasant acquaintance with Mr. Frederick Chapman.

They rejected it on the report of their reader. Yet they were themselves so convinced of the merits of the work, that Mr. Chapman told Mrs. Henry Wood they did what they had never done before : returned the work to their reader for reconsideration.

A second time the report was unfavourable, and *East Lynne* was finally declined.

"I think you are making a mistake," my mother remarked to Mr. Chapman. "I am sure the book will be a success."

"I think so, too," he replied. "But we have made it a rule never to publish upon an unfavourable verdict, and it is a rule we have never yet broken."

That they did not break it in this instance, he afterwards admitted how great was their regret.

East Lynne was then offered to Messrs. Smith and Elder. Perhaps it did not fall into the hands of Mr. Williams, who had appreciated *Fane Eyre*. Or perhaps it did so, and found no favour with him. However this may have been, Messrs. Smith and Elder also very politely declined the work. When it was returned, it had every appearance of never having been opened.

It next came under the consideration of Mr. Bentley, who at once accepted it.

"I should not publish it," he said to my mother, "but I believe it will be successful."

I remember her repeating the remark to my father, and his reply. "I suppose that may be taken for granted," he laughed.

Mr. Bentley asked for a motto, and my mother chose one out of Longfellow :

"Truly the heart is deceitful, and out of its depths of corruption
Rise like an exhalation the misty phantoms of passion :
Angels of light they seem, but are only delusions of Satan.

* * * * *

This is the cross I must bear ; the sin and the swift retribution."

A more fitting motto could not have been taken. It so adjusted itself to the book that it might have been written for it. With Mr. Bentley it found so much favour that he said he should advertise it with the title, and did so.

III.

LONGFELLOW was one of Mrs. Henry Wood's favourite poets. She was in perfect sympathy with his feeling and sentiment. The pure and elevated tone of his writings was in exact accordance with her own mind and nature. Nearly all her mottoes are taken from him.

She saw in him more thought than is generally admitted, and always said it was easier to find a motto in Longfellow than in any other poet. Perhaps this was partly because their minds ran, as it were, in the same groove. They both took the same high standard of life, its end and aims and responsibilities, and the necessity for making it upwardly progressive.

But my mother did not read all the poets. Shakespeare, Longfellow, Byron, parts of Tennyson and Mrs. Browning, and some of the very old song writers : these were nearly all she cared for. Yet her mind was stored with poetry. There was hardly an old and famous song that she could not repeat by heart the moment it was referred to her. Longer poems she equally remembered, and stores of Shakespeare. Of Goldsmith she never tired, and she also knew by heart very much of his poetry and prose. These things had never been learned, but simply acquired by the power of a strangely retentive memory. Shakespeare, it has already been remarked, she began to be familiar with from the time she was ten years old.

If asked to do so, she would sometimes recite to us in the twilight, by the hour together, poem after poem, with a power that was quite remarkable ; an intonation and emphasis that seemed to bring out new meanings and hidden charms, and revealed all her depth of feeling ; whilst her soft and silvery voice, clear and distinct, sweet and low, at all times held us under a spell.

With the modern *Æsthetic School*, it is perhaps unnecessary to say she had no sympathy, and did not attempt to read it. The mind's poetical bias is formed in early life, and in my mother's earlier days the *Æsthetic School* was a thing of the future. Independently of this, her mind could never have accepted it. With all her love for poetry, she took too clear and earnest a view of the seriousness of life ; and in spite of the extreme romance of her nature, she had not a spark of strained or unhealthy sentiment within her.

Some of Christina Rossetti's writings pleased her very much ; especially a short poem of four or five verses, called *Amor Mundi*, which she thought particularly beautiful and true.

Another of her favourite poems, for its simplicity and truthfulness to life, came out some years ago anonymously : *The Twin Genii*, written by Mrs. Plarr. The genii in this instance are Pleasure and Pain. This poem she introduced into one of her Johnny Ludlow stories, not then knowing who had written it.

Upon this, Mrs. Plarr wrote to me and said how much flattered she had felt at seeing her poem quoted in *Johnny Ludlow*. For, like many others, she had given me undeserved credit, and placed me on a pedestal of fame to which I had no claim. It was difficult to contradict at the time the rumour that I was the author of *Johnny Ludlow* without running the danger of betraying the secret.

I remember Mary Cecil Hay—whose death last year was so sad and touching—saying that the first time she ever saw me she said

very emphatically to herself: "That is Johnny Ludlow." When the author's name was declared, she was puzzled and confused about it, and for long after found it incomprehensible.

So also with Miss Emily Leith, herself a poetess, and niece to Mrs. Plarr. The authorship of *Johnny Ludlow* had just been declared, when I happened to meet her at a reception at Miss Dickens's.

"I am bewildered," she said. "I thought *you* were the author of *Johnny Ludlow* and wrote all those stories. I cannot tell what to make of it."

There was an immense amount of condemnation in her tone, as if I had injured society at large and committed an unpardonable sin.

"I know the rumour has gone abroad, and regret it," I answered. "People chose to take up the idea, and you must see how difficult it was to contradict it. Nevertheless, the mistake is puzzling. Johnny Ludlow treats of a time, and circumstances, and people, and a condition of society, all belonging to a period before I was born: all described with a realism which, it is easily seen, is the result of personal observation and familiarity. All this crowd of people were part of my mother's life and experience. The old Squire and Tod and Johnny were her personal friends. They existed, and were not mere creations of fancy. The stories betray, too, an intimate acquaintance with almost all the highways and byways of Worcestershire, a county of which I scarcely know anything. No one could write *Johnny Ludlow* who had not spent many years in Worcestershire."

"For all that, I cannot understand it," was the retort. "How can Mrs. Henry Wood be the author of *Johnny Ludlow*? Surely only a man could write these stories?"

And here was unconsciously given a reason for the long and well-keeping of the secret. The *Times*, in reviewing *East Lynne*, remarked that they had never met with any lady author who had been equally successful in portraying the characters of *men*. This masculine element and atmosphere are especially evident in *Johnny Ludlow*. The spirit of boyhood and manhood so runs through every page, that no one, friend, stranger or critic, ever guessed the truth. Johnny himself is so real and lifelike, that no one would suspect his being the creation of a feminine hand.

Beyond ourselves, the printers alone knew who wrote *Johnny Ludlow*. I have had many a moment's amusement with my mother about this confusion of authorship. Many entertaining anecdotes and incidents have arisen from it; but to me they were also attended with a certain sense of discomfort. The burden of a praise and credit to which you have no right is a hard one to bear, and at last becomes intolerable.

It was the effect of the ever-increasing rumour which at last caused the secret to be given up. Continual dropping will wear away a stone, and, after many a request on my part, my mother at length yielded to my wish that the authorship of *Johnny Ludlow* should be declared.

So when the Second Series of *Johnny Ludlow* appeared under Mrs. Henry Wood's name, the world was astonished and incredulous. Even then some refused to believe their eye-sight, whilst others seemed to go so far as to doubt the statement.

And how true is it that—

"You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still."

Many still seem unaware that I never wrote a line of *Johnny Ludlow*, and that to Mrs. Henry Wood alone all credit is due. Even Mary Howitt writes to me from her home in the Tyrol, and says: "Will you tell me of yourself? Are you still working at the *Johnny Ludlow* Series, of which I believe you are the author?"

And what could I reply, except that: "Your question proves how very much you must have withdrawn from the world. My mother wrote every line that ever appeared under the name of Johnny Ludlow. She was Johnny Ludlow, and not I."

"A mystery as well kept as the author of *Junius*," remarked another writer not long ago.

IV.

To return to the earlier days: and to beg the reader's indulgence for a moment I speak of myself.

From the time that I was nine years old, I began to take the deepest interest in my mother's writings: as vivid then, I believe, as in any subsequent year of my life. Her short stories ever bore for me the greatest charm. I counted the days when the magazines were due in France; and when they arrived, read them with eagerness and excitement. Whilst my mother, seated in an inner drawing-room of her house, wrote her stories for the following month, I, near the fire in winter, or amongst her beautifully-arranged flowers in summer, read those that had just appeared.

Like Mr. Francis Ainsworth in maturity, my childish mind would wonder where and where it all came from: these inexhaustible stories, of which each seemed to me more beautiful than the last. I have spent many an hour gazing in such passionate rapture and adoration as surely boy never yet gave to mother, marvelling even then at the strange beauty and refinement of the face—"that delicacy and refinement of features and complexion," as Mary Howitt now writes of her—bending over her manuscript; every now and then looking up with her marvellous eyes, to pause a moment for a particular word or expression: and I have watched, until I could watch no longer, the delicate and exquisite hand tracing its course over the paper.

In her dress—to bring her more vividly before the reader—she was ever the same; so that we ever had one distinct and unvarying impression of her. She never wore anything but the plainest, but richest, black silk, trimmed with costly and drooping laces that so

wonderfully set off all her beauty and refinement. Only in the heat of summer would the heavier material be discarded for light and flowing substances, which seemed almost more fitted to her delicate and fragile frame. She was at all times dressed in the perfection of taste. And she possessed another and a very great virtue: at any moment of her life, had the most exalted personage in the country called upon her, she would have been found ready to receive them. She always left her room soon after eight o'clock in the morning, perfectly and completely dressed. There was no exception to this in any day of her life.

Even in those early days of which I have been speaking, I felt: as a child feels, that, unable to analyse its thoughts, yet often unconsciously stumbles upon the truth: even then I felt how different was that wonderful face and spirit from all others: all whom I ever knew or saw or conversed with.

Few, no doubt happily for them, can have had so impressionable a childhood: so painfully sensitive that all my young thoughts and emotions were buried fathoms deep and remained for ever unsuspected; and up to the age of twelve, I was so self-contained and undemonstrative, that I was considered—to use a homely but expressive phrase—the fool of the family.

Where this temperament exists in childhood, it is a misfortune, for it is generally followed in after life by much mental and physical suffering. I was particularly susceptible to the influence of people: was intensely and fearfully happy or miserable with them, according to the impression they made upon me. By some mysterious instinct, I read people's characters in a manner that I cannot even now account for. It was no effort of thought or intelligence, but a something borne in upon me whether I would or no. I was constantly attracted or repelled towards those I met by this strange and uncomfortable power: and it often brought me into trouble. In all troubles, however, I ever had a strong rock of defence in my mother.

Where this unusual instinct exists in childhood, it generally disappears in maturity. Reason takes its place; and reason is proud and despises instinct. But whereas instinct never errs, reason very often does so. In my own case, perhaps the less said about reason the better—for the instinct remains.

On one occasion, when I was only eight years old, this strange instinct was so strongly upon me that had my father only followed its guidance (who would do anything but laugh at the instinct of a child of eight?) he would have been spared an almost life-long trouble.

With my father, indeed, this very thing brought me into constant hot water, though his amiable nature never went beyond a word of reproof. But I have said that there never existed a less imaginative nature than his, and he had no sympathy with anything outside the region of fact: certainly neither sympathy nor toleration with what he considered the fancies of a child.

My elder brother, who was many years my senior, took advantage of my timid nature, and was the torment of my life. He was the incarnation of mischief, spirited and daring to the last degree; getting into trouble wherever he went, but with his singular good fortune always getting out of it again. Fortunately for me he was seldom at home. Perhaps this is the reason why, in after life, we have become not only brothers but friends.

My father also strongly disapproved of my devotion to fiction, and even my mother would sometimes endeavour to restrain my ardour. But looking back upon those days, I am convinced that this early reading did me not harm but good. The mind was unconsciously preparing itself for the work of life.

In those early days a very different career had been planned out for me. My father and mother both destined me for the Church; and to my mother, with her old cathedral life and associations, the idea was peculiarly agreeable. With my father, I am sorry to have to record—unflattering as it is to myself—that he was chiefly influenced by the persuasion that nature had endowed me with so small a share of brains that I should never be fitted for anything else.

This destiny for the Church was never to be fulfilled; and I went on reading stories until, at a more serious age, a tutor's authority stepped in, and fiction had to become little more than a recreation and relief from harder reading and study.

But those quiet hours and years of childhood, passed almost absolutely and solely in the company of that calm, lovely and gentle spirit, have been of use to me in many other ways. Their recollection has clung to me through life down to the present hour: a remembrance of intense, undying happiness, full of an atmosphere of perfect sympathy, love, and beauty; of absolute and very rare refinement. An influence that was henceforth to be a loadstar: a remembrance that has served me in good stead in many of the dark and clouded hours of my life.

V.

I HAVE said that the stories in the magazines were succeeded by *East Lynne*.

When the work was appearing in *Colburn's New Monthly*, it was a very sad time to us all. For my mother was seriously ill, and as the months went on and brought no relief, it seemed as if she were destined not to recover. Her illness puzzled and baffled all the physicians who attended her, and not one of them could do anything for her.

In the previous years, she had been a martyr to indigestion. I have seen her, day after day, for months at a time, when the attack was upon her, lying upon the floor in most terrible and acute agony.

Neither couch nor reclining chair would do ; nothing but the hard, carpeted floor. The pain would last from one to two hours, and would then leave her, well, but exhausted.

This would last for months, recurring day after day. Then suddenly, without warning, apparently for no cause, it would leave her for months with a perfect freedom from suffering that only so sensitive a nature as hers could appreciate.

About the time that *East Lynne* was appearing, all this culminated in a strange and serious and mysterious illness, causing at times the most intense suffering, and which lasted for eighteen months. No doctor could give relief. One doctor thought one thing, one another ; but none could cure. My mother travelled from one place to another, tried all kinds of different airs, all sorts of remedies. Everything failed.

I remember one special day on which she was unusually depressed, yet, as ever, calm and resigned. She had taken up one of my father's medical books, and referring to maladies, apparently found one that exactly described her case. "This disease is incurable and ends in death," declared the book ; and my mother felt that all hope for her was over.

When her doctor called that same afternoon, she pointed this out to him, expressing her sad conviction.

We most of us know that in reading a medical work, it is quite possible to imagine that we have every symptom it contains. The doctor acknowledged the apparent similarity of cases, but assured his patient that the most important symptom of all was certainly absent, and that she was therefore mistaken. He added that though her illness completely puzzled him, he saw no present reason why she should not recover.

I can never forget the sadness and sorrow of that time : the sickness of hope deferred ; day after day, month after month, hoping against hope ; until at last we almost gave up in despair. Through all, my mother was calm, resigned and cheerful, dreading the worst for our sakes more than for her own. At the end of eighteen months, her powers of endurance seemed drawing to a close.

It was through this illness that she wrote a great portion of *East Lynne*, between the paroxysms of pain and suffering ; sending her MS. now from one place, now from another, wherever she might happen to be.

At length she was cured in a very singular way : and the old saying that desperate diseases require desperate remedies was reversed in her case. The doctors had declared they could do nothing more. She was reduced to the utmost. Yet the beauty of her face had never been so dazzling, so ethereal. Then, indeed, one almost saw the spirit shining through the frail tenement.

One day an old woman, hearing of her illness, called and asked to see her. She was admitted.

"Madam," she said, in quaint, old-fashioned speech, "I can cure you, if you will allow me to do so."

I happened to be in the room at the time, and the determined tones of the visitor sent conviction to the brain and the blood coursing through the heart. It was like restoring life from the dead, changing despair to hope.

But the patient thought it very unlikely that an old woman could succeed where some of the cleverest doctors in England had failed. Yet she listened to this new and singular authority.

The visit was not an interested one. The woman, though in humble life, was quite above the need of charity. For her station, she was in very comfortable circumstances. Her motive, therefore, could not be mistaken.

My mother listened to the prescription, which was so simple that she promised to give it a trial.

The new "doctor" was a woman of singular intelligence, and I afterwards had many a deep argument with her, in which I was not seldom defeated. She was so positive of her case, so certain that cure would follow, that it was impossible not to be affected by her confidence. Moreover, when all else has failed and hope is abandoned, who does not turn to the smallest promise of relief?

"I will try your remedy," said my mother. "I see that it can do no harm if it does no good. And if I am cured," she added laughingly, "it will be by your remedy and not by faith; for I cannot think that anything so simple can cure anything so serious."

"Try it, madam," replied the old woman, as she got up to leave. "Try it, madam; and in three months I will answer for your recovery."

It was tried, and was successful.

Up to this time, the illness had not shown the slightest symptom of yielding. At the end of three months, during which time the remedy was faithfully pursued, health had perfectly returned, and she ceased to suffer. The sun shone again in our sky, we were happy once more.

In the beginning, my mother had mentioned the visit to her doctor, announcing his rival and describing the remedy. Instead of ridiculing it, as she had expected, he advised her to give it a trial, though laughing at the idea of its doing any good. He was astonished and converted by the result, and declared he should prescribe it for some of his patients.

VI.

I WELL remember following *East Lynne* month by month as it came out in the magazine, and being absorbed in the sorrows of the heroine. Her troubles touched me as if she had been a reality: as only boys in the first freshness of youth and feeling can be affected. The unhappy fate of Lady Isabel was my constant theme whenever I

could find a sympathising ear, or one who was in the secret of the story and its author.

The same kind of feeling was shown in Norway in connection with *Lord Oakburn's Daughters*: as a friend, holding there a distinguished position under Government, not long ago informed me.

The book was translated into Norwegian, and appeared in the chief paper in Christiania. It created so much interest and sensation, that in that part of the story where Lord Oakburn dies, friends meeting each other that day in the street, shook hands and greeted each other with the words: "The old lord is dead!"

Amongst those who were in the confidence of the author of *East Lynne* was Mary Howitt, and I remember a letter she wrote to my mother when the story was nearing its close.

"My dear Mrs. Wood," it began:

"I cannot tell you how high an opinion I have of *East Lynne*, but this I will say: that you have only to publish it with your name attached to it, and you will at once become famous."

The work appeared in due time, and I do not think Mrs. Howitt proved an untrue prophet.

VII.

WHEN *East Lynne* came out, my mother's constitution had rallied from the shock of her late illness. Henceforth she was never again prevented from taking her seat day after day in her reclining chair and writing.

Some authors can only write when they are in what they call the mood. Days and weeks will sometimes pass, and, like a silent Quakers' Assembly, "the spirit does not move them." I believe that it was so with Charlotte Brontë, and that sometimes for months together her power completely left her. And I remember Mrs. S. C. Hall telling me that she could not write continuously: after a certain amount of work done, the brain grew tired, and sometimes needed days and weeks of rest.

It was never so with Mrs. Henry Wood. She never knew what it was not to be in a humour for writing. It was not only that she could write, but that she always felt a positive desire to do so. She could not have lived without writing. As Julia Kavanagh once said to me: "It becomes as necessary to us as food or sleep, and cannot be laid aside." With Charles Dickens, the feeling of a gradual loss of power, the fear of losing it altogether, was, I believe, one of the greatest troubles of his later days.

In my mother's case, work was never laid aside, and it never would have been most probably, even had she lived much longer. But in the last two or three years of her life, she found that whilst on some days she could write very rapidly, there were other days when she wrote very slowly indeed. It took her much longer to write her

stories, and cost her much more labour, but it was always a labour of love.

"I feel quite vexed with myself," she remarked to me one day in last autumn. "I write so slowly compared with what I once wrote. It now takes me four months to accomplish the amount of work that I could once have done in as many weeks."

VIII.

I HAVE said that *East Lynne* and many succeeding works were written in a reclining chair; yet I have known my mother begin at nine o'clock in the morning and write until six in the evening. Only for a very short time in the day would her work be put down for a very light luncheon. All through her life, it may be said that she took only one meal a day; the lightest possible breakfast and luncheon, but a late and substantial dinner.

After working from nine until six, she has been as mentally bright and animated as when the day began. But this close work was only done during a time of extreme pressure. When *East Lynne* had appeared, she undertook engagements without realising the amount of labour they would entail upon her. But she was so conscientious, that an engagement made or a promise given was sacred and binding. She never kept anyone waiting an hour for any manuscript.

But the pressure of these particular engagements once over, she never again undertook anything it would be difficult to accomplish. She returned to her original manner and time of writing: from half past eight until half past twelve in the morning, a rule henceforth very strictly followed. It is also singular that whilst in the earlier days she could only write in a reclining chair, in later days, and with the aid of a very simple support for the spine, she was able to sit and write at a table.

This support undoubtedly prolonged her life many years. Without it, she could scarcely have sat up for an hour in the day, certainly could not have written for ten minutes at any table. Had this support been sooner thought of and employed, no doubt the serious mischief arising from the curvature of the spine might have been at least delayed, and life very much prolonged.

Her mind was so fresh and vigorous and active; her face so young and lovely; her energy so unabated; her interest in everything and everyone around her so vivid, so earnest; her sympathies were so unexhausted, so inexhaustible, that we shall ever feel she has left us before her time.

With most people living to a certain age, there is a gradual decay of the bodily and mental faculties: a loosening of the hold on life. Memory fails; feelings grow blunted; the world is waxing dim; the silver thread is relaxing; the golden bowl is breaking. Death comes at last,

naturally, without violence, as a happy release. With the sorrow of parting, there is the consolation of a life completely lived.

With my mother, it was the opposite. Very singularly, as the body weakened, the mind grew brighter and more vigorous, the brain more active and brilliant, the face more youthful and lovely, the eyes more soft and sparkling. In every way she seemed to grow younger. This, in one sense, has made her loss so terrible, so much harder to bear, so absolutely impossible to realise. Time in no way softens the indescribable pain of this impression. It never will. It is the sudden and appalling silence of death, in a moment rending asunder the fulness of life in all its beauty and freshness.

A friend who saw her last year, whilst on a short visit to England from Florence, writes me word that she was more than ever struck with her wonderfully transparent beauty : so much so that she said to herself she feared Mrs. Henry Wood was not long for this world. "It is ever thus," she adds in her letter. "These beautiful natures are always more beautiful as the end approaches."

IX.

I HAVE slightly touched above upon the commonplace subject of meals, and this brings to my mind that I have often heard it remarked that the author of *Danesbury House*, a temperance story, ought to have been an abstainer from wine.

This is where the world misjudges. *Danesbury House* was certainly a temperance story, but not one of total abstinence. Mrs. Henry Wood never advocated this doctrine or thought it necessary, except in cases of excess. I do not believe a single page of *Danesbury House* advises total and universal abstinence except in extreme cases. But she was equally firm in insisting that for those who had no self-control, the only right and possible course to pursue was that of absolute and complete denial.

For others, on the contrary, she saw virtue in moderation. It is a greater merit to be moderate than to abstain. Even Dr. Johnson found this. "I can abstain," he said, "but I cannot be moderate." And in these cases, to abstain is the one remedy and refuge, and this is the lesson that *Danesbury House* teaches.

Mrs. Henry Wood's creed was Temperance, not Total Abstinence. Whilst laying down strict and very conscientious rules of duty and conduct for herself, which she kept as faithfully and earnestly as the sun keeps its course, she was of those who think that all things are given us richly to enjoy. It was better to show forth our gratitude to the Giver of all Good by a moderate use of earth's bounties and blessings than by rejecting them altogether.

Narrow-mindedness was a state of being with which she had no sympathy : nothing could be more antagonistic to her wide and generous nature. She had not the pointed forehead of the ascetic, but the broad brow of the philanthropist. With her the state of the

heart was everything. Without interfering with the religious views of others, she herself did not hold with fastings and widened phylacteries. The advanced views of the present day: forms and ceremonies, postures and genuflections, candlesticks and processions, priestly garments and incense: with these she had nothing in common. Of the confessional she had the greatest horror. She considered that the great danger of forms and ceremonies was that whilst in the first place they could never avail, there was yet further the almost inevitable risk of substituting the ceremonial for the spiritual.

As a girl, she had attended the good old-fashioned, high-church services of the cathedral, and in such services she joined, heart and soul; she had mixed with the old-fashioned, high-church dignitaries. Her love for them never changed. But the high-church services of those days would be considered moderate, if not evangelical, in these. In her opinion, religion was not found in forms and dogmas and a special ritual, but in the condition of the heart and the spirit. If these were true and right in the sight of Heaven, all else must be right also.

Her own convictions were as sound as convictions can be that are based absolutely upon the Bible; they were profound and unchangeable; she would most certainly have died for her faith; but she seldom spoke of these matters, and never argued about them. She was a law unto herself, but not a law unto others; but the strict lines of her life were founded upon the scriptures—she set before her the one MODEL—and upon these she rested. Better than arguments, more forcible than dogmas, more convincing than ceremonials, she led others by the strongest of all powers, the force of example: the absolute and unfailing consistency of a singularly pure and beautiful life.

X.

As soon as the proof sheets of *East Lynne* had been corrected and the book was out, my father and mother went abroad, their first destination being Dieppe.

France had ceased to be their home. But every year they went back for a certain period to the land where so much of their lives had been passed, enjoying once more the society of old friends, the blue skies and balmy airs of France. No visits ever gave them so much pleasure. My mother's face was never more radiant, my father's sunny temperament never more conspicuous than at these times.

On the occasion of this especial visit, after the appearance of *East Lynne*, my mother had regained her health, her beauty, the brilliancy and softness of her complexion, the even flow of her bright and gentle spirits. Though now some years past forty, she looked less than thirty. A more sympathetic and sparkling companion could not have existed: and I remember even now that in those

days, in any public assembly in which she might chance to find herself, where she was unknown, the loveliness of her face as she entered the room would attract universal attention.

Dieppe was then the most fashionable sea-port town in France, and many an after-season of gaiety and pleasure we spent there.

Now it would be picnic parties to the Château d'Arques; now mixing in all the rank and fashion assembled in the Casino or on the terrace overlooking the plage, where all was fun and merriment, and that delicious, unceremonious refinement, of which Dieppe was then essentially the type.

Now it was ambassadors' balls, where one found as much enjoyment, but more state and ceremony. And sometimes it would be quiet, social evenings, where not infrequently mesmerism and spiritualism, then so much talked about, would cause the hours to pass in bewilderment and mystery, and a wonder as to how these things were done.

Amongst all this fashionable and aristocratic crowd, to me the dignified figure and the brilliant conversation of Mrs. Milner-Gibson stand out most conspicuously. She was one of my mother's great friends. So witty and charming and sympathetic—the second most perfect hostess in the world, as the greatest man of his day said of her—that with her and my mother most of my time was spent: a very happy trio. My father was no longer living.

But on their visit to Dieppe after *East Lynne* had appeared, I was not with them. After settling down at their hotel, my mother took up by chance the *Daily News*, and the first thing that caught her attention was a review of *East Lynne*: the first she had seen, one of the first to appear.

"This is a work of remarkable power," it began. "It is concerned with the passions; and exhibits that delicacy of touch and knowledge of the emotional part of our mental structure, which would reveal the sex of the author even without the help of the title page. The great merit of the work consists in an artistic juxtaposition of characters strongly contrasted with one another."

Then followed an analysis of the plot, concluding with:

"The story displays a force of description and dramatic completeness we have seldom seen surpassed. The interest of the narrative intensifies itself to the deepest pathos, and shakes the feelings. The closing scene, where the dying penitent, under the impulse of strong human affection, reveals herself to her lost husband and is at length forgiven, is in the highest degree tragic, and the whole management of the story exhibits unquestionable genius and originality."

One can imagine the pleasure with which the author read these first words of recognition. Their influence must have sweetened all the days of her stay abroad. The beauties of earth, the sparkling sea—that sea which to her was ever the greatest delight; the grandest and loveliest object in nature—the blue skies, the sunshine, the fields and

flowers, must have gained an additional charm as she began to dream of a day when she would be known and appreciated.

A dream long delayed. For my mother wrote *East Lynne* and really commenced her literary career at a time when many writers have begun to think of giving up work. Scott was forty-five when his first book was written, and my mother was more than forty-five when *East Lynne* appeared.

Other reviews followed quickly upon the *Daily News*.

"*East Lynne* is so interesting," said the *Saturday Review*, "that the interest begins with the beginning of the first volume and ends with the end of the third. The faults on which criticism fastens most naturally, are all, or almost all, avoided. It is not spun out. It is not affected, or vulgar, or silly. It is full of a variety of characters, all touched off with point, finish and felicity. It bears unmistakable signs of being written by a woman, but it has many more of the excellencies than of the weaknesses of women's writing."

In speaking of the legal portion of *East Lynne*, the *Saturday Review* remarked :

"What is more wonderful is that the legal proceedings taken when the murder is finally discovered are all, or almost all, right. There is a trial, with its preliminary proceedings, and a real summing up, and a lively cross-examination. Mrs. Wood has an accuracy and method of legal knowledge about her which would do credit to many famous male novelists."

I may here remark that her legal knowledge was really extensive and accurate. She had known several great lawyers intimately, and one of them used to say that her knowledge of law was quite equal to his. She took the keenest interest in all great trials. She followed out the threads and points of an intricate case with the greatest clearness and insight. In all important trials where mystery or complications were involved, or doubt and indecision as to right and wrong, guilty or not guilty, she quickly made up her mind at an early stage, saw the strong and the weak points, and was scarcely ever wrong in the opinion she formed. She often said that had she been a man, she would have made a first-rate lawyer, with a passionate love for her work.

The *Saturday Review* continued :

"The murder is not the main incident of the story. The chief place is reserved for the sorrows of an erring wife. . . . The method of dealing with this theme is entirely Mrs. Wood's own, and shows very remarkable and unusual skill. . . . Evidently such a plot affords much scope for fine drawing of character and for powerful and effective scenes. In every one of the three parts of the story, Mrs. Wood has been successful. She places before us a distinct picture of Lady Isabel as a young, ignorant, kind-hearted, charming girl, with a gentle spirit, although with ill-disciplined feelings and an utter want of worldly wisdom. In the second part, Lady Isabel is not made either too bad or too good. We cannot bring ourselves to condemn her very harshly, and yet the authoress never for a moment allows us to doubt of her abhorrence of such a crime. But the gem of this part is the character of Barbara Hare, who presents exactly the qualities which Lady Isabel wanted ; who has strong sense and

a right judgment, and an adoring love for her husband, very different from the gentle, flickering liking which Lady Isabel bestowed on the hero. The third part, however, must have been the most difficult to write, for it is all necessarily pathetic, and to sustain pathetic writing is a great tax on the powers of a story teller. Considering the very great difficulty of the task, the success is undeniable. Few persons could read with dry eyes the scenes that pass between the despairing mother and the little dying boy to whom she may not reveal her love. And an achievement quite as great is the contrast that is preserved between the characters of the two wives brought into daily contact under such singular circumstances. Mrs. Wood has quite avoided the fault of making Barbara too good. Although, at the close of the story, the whole of the attorney's affections are most properly concentrated on his living wife, the reader is not sorry to be permitted to have a slight preference for the dead one."

"*East Lynne*," said *The Observer*, "is so full of incident, so exciting in every page, and so admirably written, that one hardly knows how to go to bed without reading to the very last page. . . . The trial scene is well depicted. There are no inconsistencies of time and place to shock the intelligent reader, such as most novels are full of; and you rise from its perusal with satisfaction, feeling that the same events might reasonably have been expected to rise under similar circumstances."

"*East Lynne*," said the *Morning Post*, "is touching, well-intentioned, and written in the highest tone of morality and earnestness. It is a strong appeal to women by a woman, who would urge upon her fellows the invincible truth that only the ways of wisdom are those of pleasantness, and only her paths are those of peace. . . . Mrs. Wood has selected a difficult subject for a novelist whose aim is higher than that of merely providing amusement and producing excitement. To create compassion for the sinner and to avoid sympathy with the sin; to strip the abandonment of rectitude and the dereliction from principle of all their romance; to invest them with their harshest reality, and to enforce the lesson of the hopelessly inevitable punishment which is in, and by, and through the breach of the most sacred law of God and the most binding obligations of society; are responsible and onerous tasks which the writer of *East Lynne* has executed well and faithfully."

"Miss Cornelia Carlyle," said the *Press*, "is one of the most laughable elderly ladies in the whole realm of fiction."

"Nothing strikes the reader of *East Lynne* more than the extraordinary manner in which the mystery of each part of the plot is preserved," said the *Conservative*. "As the reader feels that he is moving in the different parts of the drama, and unconsciously feels himself deeply interested in its several characters, he almost trembles as each dangerous turning-point of the story is passed. *East Lynne*, we may truly say, is no ordinary novel. A high tone of morality, a remarkable discrimination of human character, and a keen perception of the manners and customs of the age, are marks by which it is especially distinguished, and form some clue to solve the mystery of its warm and greedy reception at the hands of the reading public. . . . Mrs. Henry Wood has served the interests of morality in holding up to society a mirror in which it may see itself exactly reflected. She probes deep, and does not, through any false prudery, gloss over its evils and only depict its brightest colours. The healthy sentiment and pure morality of Mrs. Henry Wood's work renders it

particularly valuable at the present time. Now, when it is fashionable to live fast and loose; now, when those who take the lead in the most select circles do not frown down, but rather encourage, those little excesses which a former generation might gravely term sins; now, when the sanctities of domestic life are threatened, and associations hallowed by time are endangered; it is a matter of no small importance that the follies, the inanities, the vices of society should be so ably portrayed and so thrillingly denounced as we see them in *East Lynne*."

These are a few extracts out of a few of the many reviews that appeared at the time, almost every one of them written in the same spirit of appreciation. I will only give one more, an extract from the *Times*. It was one of the last to appear, but its effect was more powerful than the joint influence of all the others.

"In *East Lynne*," remarked the *Times*, "we admit the authoress to have achieved a considerable success, which has brought her into the very foremost rank of her class. The authoress," it went on to say in the course of its very long review, "is really what the novelist now prefers to call himself—a moralist; and there is moral purpose in her portraits as well as vivacity. There is great breadth and clearness in her delineations of character, and her range is extensive, including many types. There is one point on which we may speak with special emphasis, and that is her capacity to portray *men*, an accomplishment so rare on the part of *lady* novelists that we do not at this moment recall any one who has exhibited it in equal degree. The two characters of Mr. Carlyle and the second Lord Mount Severn are the principal examples of this rare capacity. Mount Severn is indicated with very few touches, and yet we have a portrait worthy the best of his class, like the faces which look upon us from the canvas of Vandyke. Carlyle's is a more elaborated performance, and its harmony is preserved, in spite of its elaboration and of the many trying tests to which it is put in the progress of the story. His character is consistent with the serious pre-occupations which render him so unobservant of the love of Barbara on the one hand, and on the other of the jealousy and suffering of his wife. He errs, but it is the error of a manly nature assailed by difficulties which a more frivolous person would have anticipated. But in dealing with his difficulties, when they do come, his conduct is admirable. It is rarely that we find a hero so consistently heroic, so sensible and just, and yet so lovable. There is a strength in his character, as presented to the reader, which makes him forget the balance of qualities required for its conception on the part of the author. Let us add that it is not only a masterly portrait, but a conception of which even a moralist may be proud: a brave, noble and truthful gentleman, without the pretence of being a paragon for the humiliation of his species.

On the other hand, if we take the circle of characters in which authoresses generally most excel, we shall find the authoress here is equally skilful: that is to say, in analysing the motives and emotions of her own sex. She presents us to a little group of interesting women, each well-defined and judiciously contrasted in their relations to the story, its course and conclusion. Miss Corny is remarkably good, and so is Barbara Hare. So also are Afy Hallijohn and her sister Joyce. Isabel is less marked; but then she is the instrument on which the pathos of the story is strung, she is tossed hither and thither, and is but a frail reed for such a weight of woe and misadventure. The reader cannot fail to take an interest in her fate, nor to be satisfied with the de-

meanour of her husband on her death-bed. The feelings of the latter are just indicated to the point to which analysis may fairly go, and then the authoress retires with a wise and decorous reticence. Balzac would have gone further, and would have handled and squeezed each throbbing heartstring, as his manner was in making his morbid preparations. But our authoress has better taste and a chaster purpose; nor does she effect to fathom the very gulf of human frailty. In short, she evinces the tact of a gentlewoman even in the passages where less equable and chastened temperaments have a natural tendency to literary hysterics. The death-bed of Lady Isabel's child is an example of this self-command, where the child is represented as asking a child's questions under circumstances where others would have made him a precocious angel, and where the announcement is also made to the mother in her agony that her secret is known to the faithful Joyce."

The *Times* then proceeded to give a long extract from the work, concluding with the words:

"We have no occasion to say more on behalf of a story from which we are able to quote such a passage as the above. *East Lynne* is a first rate novel."

The passage alluded to is the death-bed scene between Willie Carlyle and his mother, and the recognition of Lady Isabel by Joyce.

XI.

AND so *East Lynne* became not only the great success of the season, but one of the successes of the century.

No one accepted it so calmly and quietly as the author herself; no one could have worn her laurels more modestly. To say that she was not gratified by all the praise and recognition she received would be to make her more than human. Genius is ever sensitive, and the slightest unsympathetic touch will cause it to shrink within itself with a pain those less gifted natures who inflict it cannot possibly realise.

For this reason, my mother soon discovered that to read reviews, whether favourable or unfavourable, was an unsatisfactory experience that bore no good fruit; and in a very short time she never had them brought under her notice and never even knew when they appeared.

The only exception she made was in the case of the first series of *Johnny Ludlow*. The book appeared anonymously. The whole press was full of praise for this unknown writer, and she much enjoyed reading about herself from, as it were, an outside point of view.

And it may be remarked that in *Johnny Ludlow*, Mrs. Henry Wood achieved what so many had attempted and so few realised—a second and distinct reputation. It has been said that life is too short to make this possible, and it is certain that it has seldom been accomplished.

When my mother was on what proved to be her death-bed, though we knew it not, she told me one evening that for many years she had had it in her mind to write a series of stories after the fashion of *Johnny Ludlow*, but to make them the experiences of a governess.

"I am certain that they would have been very popular," she said. "But," she added sadly, "I shall never write them now. It is all over."

They were exactly the sort of papers that she would have done so well ; revealing intimate interiors of English homes ; the dramas and tragedies, mysteries and complications that life itself is so full of, and that her imagination seemed able to create without end and with the greatest ease. No doubt their popularity would have equalled, or almost equalled, that of *Johnny Ludlow*.

Mrs. Henry Wood possessed the very rare gift of excelling equally in long or short stories. The two powers are not often combined. I do not say that a novelist will not succeed in writing a few good short tales besides his longer works ; but my mother, in addition to between thirty and forty long novels, must have written not less than from four to five hundred short stories, every one of them possessing a distinct plot carefully thought out.

Her powers of work and her imagination were, indeed, almost miraculous, and led one to believe in the Vicar's remark, that there is such a thing as secular inspiration. It is impossible for the reader to realise the amount of mere manual labour that her work from first to last entailed upon her. And all accomplished by a fragile form, absolutely devoid of all physical and muscular power, tender and sensitive and delicate as a lily, and to be as carefully tended. A small child had greater strength than she, and could easily have mastered her.

And all this done by one living a quiet life, much in the retirement of her study : leaving those about her to take their part in the world, and hearing much of the world and of friends through their experience. Before *East Lynne* appeared, my mother had mixed much with the world and gone much into society abroad ; but when she seriously entered upon a literary career, she felt it would be impossible to do much work and also to satisfy the claims of the world ; and to a very great extent she gave up the latter, confining herself chiefly to the pleasure of receiving her friends at home.

XII.

East Lynne was not destined to enjoy a mere passing popularity. It has been out more than a quarter of a century, and it is even more popular to-day than when it first appeared, and the demand is ever increasing. It has already been stated that an edition is never less than ten thousand copies, and that in most years a reprint is required. It has been translated into every known tongue—even into Parsee and Hindustanee ; and the readers will gather a large circle of Hindoos around them and read *East Lynne* to them in their own tongue, and they will rock themselves to and fro and laugh and sob by turns.

A short time ago, the chief Spanish bookseller in Madrid wrote to my mother through Messrs. Bentley and Son, and said that the most

popular book on his shelves, original or translated, was *East Lynne*. His only motive for writing, he added, was that he thought it would please the author to know this.

Not very long ago it was translated into Welsh, and brought out in a Welsh newspaper.

It has been dramatised and played countless times. Sometimes it has appeared on the same night at three different London theatres. It is always being played in the provinces throughout Great Britain. A short time ago, in one of the large Scotch towns, it was being advertised by means of a balloon, which, high in the air, announced that *East Lynne* was being performed at the Royal Theatre.

In America, for many years it has been the most popular of their plays, just as *East Lynne*, the work, has been the most popular of their books, and has sold very far over a million copies. In the English Colonies, the sale of Mrs. Henry Wood's works increases steadily year by year, and there, of all writers present or past, she is said to be the most popular.

In France, the story has been dramatised, and is constantly being played in Paris and the provinces. Mr. North-Peat translated the work into French; and only a few days ago, in a letter received from his widow, Mrs. North-Peat tells me that when it was appearing in *La Patrie*, night after night the sellers of the newspaper went up and down the boulevards shouting out, *La Patrie: Suite de Lady Isabel!* a distinction by way of announcement never accorded to any other work. So great was its popularity as a translation.

Lady Isabel was the title given to the French translation, as *East Lynne* was thought too English to gain favour with a people who are not celebrated for their skill in pronouncing any language but their own.

It has recently been translated a second time; and now appears also under the singular title of *Le Château Tragique*.

"I think *East Lynne* almost the most interesting book I ever read," said Lord Lyttelton to a mutual friend. "And I consider the chapter headed *Alone for Evermore* one of the finest and most pathetic chapters in the whole realm of English Fiction."

This, from one who was admitted to be one of the cleverest men in England, who had taken honours at Cambridge and been bracketed with Dean Vaughan, was no slight praise.

"I am amazed at the power and interest of *East Lynne*," wrote Harriet Martineau to another friend. "I do not care how many murders or other crimes form the foundations of plo's, if they are to give us such stories as this. I wish I possessed a hundredth part of the author's imagination."

She wrote much to the same effect of *Verner's Pride*, a work which found very great favour with her.

And when you came to the author of all this work and labour, you found her the quietest and gentlest, loveliest and most modest of women, so fragile and delicate that this alone caused one to treat her with unconscious reverence and veneration. A loud tone would immediately become hushed and subdued in her presence. Her face, it is true, sparkled with intellect, which, at a first glance, lifted her out of comparison with others; for it was as exceptional as her talent, as singular as her perfect nature. Success never made the slightest change in her, except that as the years went on, she grew, if possible, more modest, more lovely, lovable and gentle. Yet hers was a tangible success as well as an intellectual, for her income resulting from her brain work for many of the later years of her life amounted to between five and six thousand a-year.

But, in her own words, it is all over now. After so much toil has come rest. Man goeth forth until the evening. Happy they who have had such a day and such an evening as hers. Everything that is lovely and chaste, everything that is gentle and graceful, reminds us of her. The sweetest chime ever heard, the softest silver bell ever cast, could never have equalled the clear and liquid tones of her matchless voice. The stars shining down night after night from the dark blue heavens, with their steadfast light, are not more pure and beautiful than was she. To gaze at them in their far away infinite repose brings some peace to the soul. Between them and earth there ever comes to us the image of her perfect face and spirit. But oh, this mystery of life, this silence of death, this necessity for separation!

Who can tell whither our BELOVED go? Are they near us or afar off? Hovering about our right hand, guarding our footsteps, or yet further than the stars, at whose very distance we shudder and recoil? Are they far away in that Heaven of Heavens, reserved for the spirits of the just made perfect?

I know not. But this I know. Where every spirit may be that is beautiful and holy, there she has entered, though her influence remains and her presence seems ever near. Nothing delighted her more than Martin's *Plains of Heaven*, it was so like the realms that ever haunted her dreams: and there, where flows the pure water of the River of Life, her spirit has taken its flight. And there she must be sought for, and will be found again by those to whom in life she was most precious and most priceless, and for whom her great heart ever beat with the pulses of the most intense though silent thought and affection.

I have been asked to say a few words about *Fohnny Ludlow*, with which stories this magazine is so intimately associated. I scarcely know if this will be possible. The effort to write these papers has indeed been a bitter-sweet, but almost too great a strain. If it is to be done, it must be in a short and concluding notice, and perhaps after somewhat more than a month's interval.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

WOULD WE RETURN AGAIN?

IF, o'er the silent river of sweet rest
 We had outsailed all earthly woe;
 If, from the shriven soul within our breast
 The countless sins of long ago
 Had all been blotted out by God's own Hand;
 If then with choruses sublime
 There gladly hailed us from the shining strand
 The souls of bygone time—

Would we return again?

If we, though having reached the rest which waits
 Brave hearts, all weary and footsore,
 Got glimpses from the open jasper gates
 Of those sweet souls we loved of yore,
 And who were walking now in ways of sin
 With tired feet, bleeding and unshod:
 With eager hope that we might lead them in
 Across the golden hills of God—

Would we return again?

If love no longer held our heart in thrall,
 If we had waked from out its dream;
 If of life's cup our lips had drained the gail,
 And joy had passed from grove and stream;
 If then, from out the gloom of buried years,
 A voice came o'er the lone, hushed land;
 And if, amidst deep penitential tears,
 One reached to us a tender hand—

Would we return again?

If we had passed the gates of easeful death,
 And left behind all woe and moan,
 Would we resume again our mortal breath,
 And tread our way back all alone?
 Would it be well that what high wisdom brought
 Should from our soul again be riven,
 With many a shining, pure, celestial thought
 Within our waning dream of heaven?—

Would we return again?

If, mingling with the shining seraph throng,
 Cleaving our way from star to star,
 We heard, mid cymbal, dulcimer and song,
 One lonesome, deep wail from afar;
 A cry from out a heart that only we
 Could fill, as in the days gone by;
 Would we drop down from such high ecstasy,
 Our soul unshadowed with a sigh?—

Would we return again?

Oh, weary world of care and stings and scorn,
 Oh, kindly, sweet rest-giving grave,
 We would not leave again the Better Morn,
 Nor swim Death's stream of cold, dark wave!
 Safe haven for the spirit tossed so long,
 Eternal home which quenchless love has brought,
 Save longing that our loved might join our song,
 Our souls on sombre wings of earthly thought,
 Would ne'er return again!

ALEXANDER LAMONT.

A WARWICKSHIRE ROMEO.

A Tale in Three Chapters.

By J. C. AYRTON.

CHAPTER I.

CAPULET AND MONTAGUE.

IN a certain old red house in the main street of Warwick lived, nearly sixty years ago, my heroine, Alice Barton, under the care of her grandfather: a fine old irascible Tory gentleman, red-faced, white-haired and opinionated, who had fallen upon days evil enough to embitter a nature originally sound at the core, but easily warped and strained by prejudice.

Pretty Alice, an orphan without brother or sister, was the very apple of the old man's eye: and she had never felt the want of youthful companionship, for she had always had a nearer and dearer associate than even a paternal one in Frank Chillingworth, the only son of a rich grazier at Whitnash. His schooldays were passed in Warwick, and his holidays were mostly spent there also—in Mr. Barton's green, high-walled garden: or sitting with Alice in the winter time in the red wainscoted parlour on the cushioned seats which ran along the deep bay windows, from which the young people were never tired of watching the familiar stir and hum of well-known figures and equipages passing in the street below.

Mr. Chillingworth chuckled rather than grumbled at his son's absorption. He loved the bright girl for her own sake; and she was said to be the richest heiress in the Midlands: for Mr. Barton was head of an old-established County Bank.

The young people were well matched. Frank was ruddy, broad-shouldered and middle sized, with keen, blue, far-sighted eyes: a true son of the rich soil which had nurtured the Chillingworths for more generations than the Bartons had been magnates in Warwick. Alice was little and fair, with an oval face, creamy-white skin, grey eyes, and hair that would curl in flowing ringlets in strong contrast to the odious fashion prevalent in '29.

The Chillingworths and Bartons were bound by the ties of long ancestral friendship, inherited by the fathers of our pair.

But of late years, the stress of politics had tended to divide them. It was a time of violent and bitter party feeling. Men were gradually drawn by natural bias or external pressure to lengths which their more sober judgment would once have deprecated most hotly. Mr. Barton grew stiffer and stiffer in his Tory proclivities as the Reform

struggle began to be heralded by universal agitation. Mr. Chillingworth joined a Fox Club, and developed a Liberal leaning into strong Liberal tenets.

Their religious views also grew to differ in an immense ratio. Mr. Chillingworth, jolly and unreflective, remained an orthodox member of the high and dry church party of his youth. Mr. Barton, naturally inclined to look on everything with a darker and more morose eye, became gradually infected by the growing Evangelicalism: and at last left his parish church to be a seat-holder in a missionary chapel set up by a star of the Clapham School to enlighten the eyes of the Midlanders.

Thither Alice was taken every Sunday, and her distaste to the dull service and long sermons was not lessened by the fact that Frank stuck sturdily to the high green-baize pew in his father's church. For Alice was neither politically nor theologically inclined. Country girls in that day mostly left it to their male relations to decide their views of such matters.

In 1829, the question of Catholic emancipation came to finish the alienation of the two old friends. Mr. Barton went home one night from a True Blue dinner to tell Alice that her engagement must be broken off. Frank had been seconding his father at a public meeting in the afternoon in favour of a resolution for removing all religious disabilities. "Not a penny of my money shall go to enrich the fields of a latitudinarian who abhors religious reform and yet would bring on Revolution!"

Alice listened, but said nothing. The old gentleman, she saw, had at least one bottle of port under his belt. She trusted the morning would bring moderation in its train.

Alas, it only brought increased determination. Neither entreaty nor argument could bring him to alter his decision: the only concession he would make was that she might see Frank herself once more, to communicate her grandfather's decision. She wrote a letter to her lover, which was blistered with the tears she proudly choked back before Mr. Barton.

Frank came even before she thought it possible the messenger could have reached him. He was more angry than alarmed. The sight of her bright little face all tear-stained made him furious.

"I have never seen you cry, Alice!" he said, "even when you were a baby: and I have often thought you should never have cause to wet your cheek with one single drop of bitterness."

"I never have had anything to cry for before this. Now I think I shall never have reason to do anything else."

"But you don't mean to say you have ever thought of giving me up?"

"What can I do, Frank?"

"Marry me in despite of the old gentleman."

"Oh, Frank!" Beyond this ejaculation Alice was silent, struck

dumb with horror. Frank reined in his impatience wonderfully, got his arm round her, and began to argue the point. She listened with attention, but at first would only shake her head wearily.

"It is forced upon us : the blame would be Mr. Barton's. No one could think less well of you," reiterated Frank in varying formula.

At last Alice was compelled to answer. "Even if anything could ever make me do a thing I have always thought of as shocking, I would never come to your house to be a burden on your father."

"A burden !" Frank laughed with reassuring scorn. "My father told me to tell you what I didn't dare to repeat till you force me to it, Alice, by talking such nonsense, that he would rather you came to us as Griseldis did to her husband than that we should lose you."

The old man had used Chaucerian English, and Frank got very red in the telling ; even thus qualified. But Alice's colour did not change. Female education was not very far advanced fifty years ago.

"I don't know who she was, Frank : but your father is always good and kind."

"He says we want a mistress for the house, not a fortune : we have money enough. Alice, will you come to Gretna Green with me ? There would be dangerous delays any other way. Remember, it lies between running away with me and giving me up. Hush, dear ! listen ! you know you would be safe in my hands : and we would be married in church directly we came back."

But Alice shrank with horror, which had even a little indignation, from the bare thought of an elopement. Frank had to leave her, sobbing as if her heart would break, and saying over and over again that she would never give him up, but that she could never, never do such a thing as he proposed. He managed to swallow the expression of his wrath in very pity for her agony of distress and shame, trusting to time to work in his behalf.

CHAPTER II.

THE NURSE'S GOOD OFFICES.

Time passed on, and Mr. Barton continued inexorable. Alice began to sicken for the sight of Frank, who kept out of her way for a while, hurt and indignant.

But as summer waxed towards autumn, she met him several times, by chance as she thought, in an old trysting place of theirs, at a style in the fields leading to Grey's Cliff. It seemed as if the feet of both had led them unwittingly to the beloved spot : for Alice was shy and wretched, Frank silent and constrained, and they exchanged but few words.

But at last he broke down, and re-urged his suit in passionate, eager

words. He had been to Mr. Barton, he said, and had bowed his pride so far as to entreat him that he would not wreck the happiness of two young lives for his whim ; but he had desired him to leave the office. A few weeks after, thinking time might have brought misgivings, Mr. Chillingworth had written him a letter to the same effect, which had been returned. The very day before that on which he now met Alice, Frank had attempted to address Mr. Barton in the High Street ; and he had turned on his heel in insulting silence, in presence of many observers.

"You will not think it necessary to mince matters with a man who treats your lover like this, Alice ?"

Distressed and perplexed beyond measure, she begged for time to think, and promised to meet Frank and give him her answer the next evening at the same place.

A country town is proverbially the head-quarters of gossip. The affairs of the Barton and Chillingworth families had excited lively interest for miles round Warwick. People took sides according to their religious or political bias, and some base partisan of the Barton faction brought to her grandfather's ears this very evening the news that Frank and Alice had met. Enraged at her disobedience, he threatened to send her to an aunt in Ireland if she ever spoke to her lover again. The sentence conveyed the idea of perpetual banishment to a Midland girl sixty years ago.

The harshness was ill-timed. She had inherited a piece of the old man's obstinacy ; she was silent, but stung into rebellion. She wrote to Frank that night, saying that she would do all he had asked her, and dispatched it by the housekeeper, who had been her nurse and was devoted to her. By the same messenger, Frank sent back a detailed plan of flight, which it would almost seem he must have contemplated for some time, so perfect were the details.

The next evening was one of Mr. Barton's nights for attending a whist club and supper, held bi-weekly at the leading Tory hotel. Alice was to meet her lover at dusk upon the Castle bridge, when they would thus gain at least five hours' clear start, and would make at once straight towards the great northern road, so as to be at Gretna as soon as horses' legs could carry them there.

"My father sends his love," wrote Frank in a hasty note sent to thank and encourage Alice. "If he were not fifteen stone of dead weight, he would make one in the carriage. He looks upon our scheme as a splendid practical joke. I feel all the responsibility of undertaking my darling Alice's happiness. Be sure you shall never have cause to do otherwise than thank Heaven you found courage to trust to your fond lover, Frank."

Young Chillingworth, as an open-handed youngster and the boldest rider to hounds in the Midlands, was the darling of the horsey interest round Warwick. He knew where to go for the best cattle and the coolest postillions, and could count on secrecy. As dusk fell, he was

waiting for Alice on the bridge which commands the view of Warwick Castle proudly overlooking the Avon. After a few minutes of suspense, a little cloaked and hooded figure, carrying a bag, was seen approaching from the town. Frank flew to meet it.

"Frank," said Alice, raising a pale face to his flushed one, "will you never think little of me in your heart for what I am doing this night?"

"My darling, my whole life will be devoted to showing you how I thank you!"

He handed her into the carriage standing near with the reverence a man pays to a princess, wrapped her up hastily but warmly, for the nights were beginning to be chilly, and then took his own seat on the box. The horses, with difficulty held in hand for the brief interval of waiting, dashed off, striking fire from the flints with their eager heels.

They had to gain the northern road by a circuitous route. It was all new to Alice, who had scarcely ever been out of Warwick; but in after days, she could recall few clear recollections of their flight. It seemed to have been a hurried, swiftly-shifting panorama. Half waking, half asleep, she saw the country rush darkly by her as they whirled through slumbering villages and rattled over the stones of busy towns, locked in the silence and deep sleep of night. She saw the sun rise in the chill dawn and set in blood-red clouds, and still they went on and on. The vision of her grandfather in hot pursuit of her, and snatching her ultimately from Frank, haunted her waking hours and troubled her fitful dreams when she could close her eyes.

They halted as seldom as they could, and at the least frequented posting-houses.

At every stage, Frank got down and came to talk to her and cheer her, resuming his seat without, despite cold or rain, directly the horses were put in. He did not seem to want sleep; he was a strong and hearty young fellow, and was strung up to a pitch of nervous excitement. At first he could hardly conceal his anxiety; but as time lengthened, and they got well on in the familiar northern road, with fresh fine horses available at every change, he grew lighter hearted. Every posting-house seemed to mark a stage nearer to triumph and Alice. But at an inn some way past York, he came to her with a face full of a new fear he could not succeed in suppressing.

"Oh! what is it?" cried Alice, as he tried to meet her eyes with the accustomed jest and smile. "Are we pursued?"

He tried to rally her out of the fancy that anything was wrong, but Alice would not be put off.

"Do I not know your face well enough by this time to see when anything is the matter. Tell me the truth, Frank!" she cried.

"The postillion says that at the last inn a mounted messenger rode into the yard before we reached it, to order a relay of horses to be in waiting for a gentleman who was pursuing a runaway couple."

Alice turned as white as death. "I knew he would move heaven and earth to overtake us and snatch me from you."

"We will not despond," cried Frank as the horses came out, their coats shining like satin in the morning sun, now high above the horizon. He helped to harness them with all speed, and they sprang forward, flying as it seemed, yet all too slow for the alarmed lovers whose fate depended upon their haste. Straining up hill, then rattling downwards, then stretching at the gallop across a reach of open moorland country, the northern hills purpling the distance. Frank looked back for the hundredth time towards noon, and saw to his horror that a distant speck dotted the white winding road, which loomed more and more distinctly on his vision, urge the pace how he might.

"We are pursued, sir!" said the postillion, looking behind at last.

"I know it!" said Frank, grinding his teeth. "And there is no shelter for miles."

The horses did their very best; the postillion plied the whip and the spur till Frank told him to desist. The sound of advancing wheels at last began to invade the stillness of the September afternoon: it caught Alice's ears: she stretched her head out of the window and cried to Frank in a voice of agony.

"He has caught us, Frank! What can we do?"

"Got a pistol, sir?" asked the postillion, turning round.

"Yes; why?"

"Shoot their leader."

"I couldn't do it to save her life!" said Frank.

"Then it's all up with us: we can do no more," said the man, a little contemptuously, as he regarded his struggling team, almost dead beat. By this time, Mr. Barton was audibly vociferating to them to stop, in a voice hoarse with passion. "If you don't, I will put a bullet through some of you," he yelled.

CHAPTER III.

LOVE LAUGHS AT BOLTS.

ALICE was not missed for some hours after her departure: no one but the housekeeper knew she was out, and as it was her duty to wait upon the parlour, no one else would see her till bedtime. But when the locking-up hour arrived, it became evident that the young mistress was absent, and the under-servants became excited. Mr. Barton arriving at home about midnight, found the house ablaze with light, and the maids in great apparent agitation. Pamela, the pretty housemaid, who had a fellow feeling for lovers in distress, met her master in the hall.

"Oh! sir! Miss Alice has gone and done herself a mischief!" the girl cried, amid her sobs. Mrs. Dixon, the housekeeper, kept dis-

creetly in the background, wringing her hands in dumb manifestation of woe.

Happily for them, he did not wait, but ran upstairs to Alice's room. It was all neat and orderly, but no letter or clue was discernable.

"They must have gone to Gretna! But I will tear her from him!"

Beside himself with passion, he ran to the nearest posting-house and ordered horses, sending on at once a mounted messenger to the next stage, with orders to have relays ready in advance all the way to Scotland. As he followed in the track of the lovers, his fury grew instead of lessening, for he imagined them successful and himself foiled. But he found at last, with a savage triumph which redoubled his efforts, that he was gaining ground upon the fugitives, who in due time fell into his clutches.

Frank's postillion pulled up his team in obedience to the pursuer's reiterated threats: and the disappointed lover had to stand by while old Barton, with no gentle hand, dragged Alice from her place in the first coach and put her into his own. She uttered no word: but she turned her eyes with a heartbroken expression upon Frank, who was white and silent, but wore a look of stern determination.

"Outwitted!" cried John Barton as he took his seat beside his granddaughter. "If I were a younger man, you should not escape with whole bones, sir."

Never a word spoke Frank, but a gleam shot from his bright blue eye. The coach turned southwards.

"Drive on, my man!" cried old Barton. "You needn't hurry the cattle this way: we can take our time going back."

A crack of the whip, and the jaded steeds began to retrace their steps with downcast heads. Meanwhile Frank was regarding the team in his own coach with critical eyes. Having selected the likeliest, he unyoked and mounted it, and sat a few minutes watching the vehicle which had snatched his prize from him in the moment of success, as it disappeared slowly in the distance. When it had almost vanished to a dim speck, he started in its wake, leaving his own postillion to follow him leisurely. At the next stage on the way homewards, he changed his weary horse for a fresh one, and resumed his pursuit of the returning travellers, taking care to leave a sufficient interval between himself and them to preclude the possibility of old Barton's hearing of his tactics.

Meanwhile Alice, seated opposite her stern and triumphant captor, was having a very bad time of it. He said but little, yet that little was more than enough: he had made up his mind to take her over to Ireland at once.

"And your aunt is a sharp woman; you won't find it easy to hoodwink her and keep up your correspondence with young fellows!" he wound up.

Worn out, trembling and ashamed, Alice felt only a burning desire to hide herself from unkindly eyes: she attempted no reply.

Mr. Barton had not closed his eyes during the journey north. Now that the strain was removed and the prize safely within his grasp, nature began at last to assert herself, and to Alice's intense relief, he dozed until they reached York, near midnight. Here the prospect of comfortable beds and a good supper was dangled before his eyes by the rubicund landlord of the posting-house, who came out bowing and smirking to suggest rest and refreshment. The bait took. Accustomed to the pleasures of the table, Mr. Barton made a hearty meal and washed it down with more than one bumper of the best wine the inn afforded. After that, his weariness becoming intolerable, he gave an order to postpone the journey till the next morning, and desired that his niece and himself should be shown to their rooms.

But his vigilance did not relax. He took the precaution of locking Alice in her chamber and removing the key. The tired girl was too sad and crushed to remonstrate, though keenly indignant; but she could not sleep, weary as she was: she paced her room, wringing her hands and crying bitterly. It was all over now. She had disgraced herself for ever to no purpose. The shame of being baffled mingled with the agony of disappointment. The scheme entered into with such shrinking of heart had miscarried disgracefully; she could never face familiar eyes again. But then banishment entailed the loss of Frank; and all this in the very hour, as it seemed, of victory. She flung herself into a seat and hid her burning, tear-stained face.

After a few moments, a low tapping at her chamber window startled her. She sprang up, terrified.

"Hush! It is I, Frank, Alice!" said a low voice she knew. "Do not be frightened. Of course I am not coming in."

She ran to the window, which the chambermaid had left wide open under its thick old-fashioned curtains. There, mounted on a ladder, stood Frank, his face on a level with hers. You need not ask if their lips met.

"I knew the old man must give in, some time. I have got everything ready," persevered Frank, still in the same hurried, low tones. "Your grandfather is asleep. The chambermaid has shut the shutters outside his window, so that he will think it is dark when he awakes, no matter how late it is! We have hours before us, Alice, and we won't be caught this time! Come with me at once, darling."

"I can't! I daren't! Oh, Frank, I am so ashamed, so wretched!" cried Alice, her head drooping on his breast. He put his arm about her, which was always his manner of commencing an argument. And it is a good one—always given like circumstances. It holds the listener, and predisposes in a mesmeric manner to consideration of the question.

"What! you will go to Ireland? you will leave me for ever? Not but that I would find you out and follow you, if you were at the

other end of the world ! But this worry and wear and tear is killing you, Alice : and it is as well to end it sooner as later. Don't think of yourself : think of me. You can get lots of lovers in Ireland : I am told they are a most susceptible people where female attractions are concerned. But how could I ever marry any other woman after having been your lover, Alice ? ”

“ I think there is blarney enough over here without going to Ireland for it,” said Alice, laughing in the midst of her tears.

“ Alice, the carriage is in waiting : we have hours before us. I can never go back to Warwick to be the laughing-stock of the country side. There is no danger. Your uncle will never be able to catch us up ; we are too near the border, and we shall have too great a start of him for that. Before he is up, you will be my wife, and safe. No man on earth will have power to part us then ! ”

Half yielding, half resisting, Alice submitted to be lifted on to the ladder, and carried down it.

It was high morn next day before Mr. Barton awoke to the full consciousness of the double trick that had been played on him. The night seemed so long that at last he struck a match and looked at his watch. The landlord, really innocent, the chambermaid, as really an accomplice of the lovers, professed entire ignorance and the deepest sympathy. But Mr. Barton knew it would only be injurious to his dignity to pursue a couple who had twelve hours' start of him, for so short a distance : and unwilling to brave the derision of the Warwickshire people, he started on a tour of some weeks' duration.

Meanwhile Frank and Alice had returned home from Gretna as fast as horses' feet could carry them, and were married at St. Mary's by special licence immediately upon their reappearance : Mr. Chillingworth giving away the bride.

Mr. Barton made a great talk about having revised his will. But Alice professed herself quite regardless of his money, and soon after the birth of her first son she went to tell the old man that he was to be called after him, and invited him to stand sponsor at the christening.

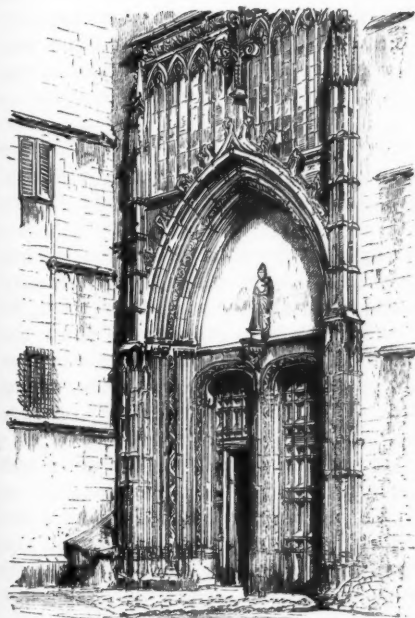
Mr. Barton was beginning to feel very lonely, and accepted the olive branch. When he died, some years after, it was found that if he had ever destroyed any will, he had never made another, and Alice inherited, as only relation, all that he had to leave.



LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"UNDER NORTHERN SKIES," ETC., ETC.

Palma, Nov., 1886.



NORTH DOORWAY OF CATHEDRAL, PALMA.

MY DEAR E.—I think we must call this a Pastoral letter. Bishops, you know, deliver Pastorals to their clerical flock, who are no doubt duly grateful. And although I am not a Bishop and you are not a flock, either within or without the Pale, I think for once we may venture to tread in the excellent footsteps of these Lights of the Church. Whether you will be grateful for your Pastoral, is more than uncertain.

It can only be the record of a simple day spent in absolute quietness and without startling incident. Essentially a pastoral day. Your interest therein must be measured by the degree of failure or success with which I may place before

you the beauties of nature. Certainly at Miramar they are transcendent.

When I finished my letter last night, I was not able to tell you of this day spent at Miramar. We both agreed it was one to be remembered.

And yet I can scarcely tell you why it had this effect upon us. I have said that it was not signalled by great events or striking episodes. Herein, perhaps, lay part of its attraction. It delighted by its simplicity.

To begin with, we had it all to ourselves.

This wealth and beauty of nature; this far-stretching, ever-sounding sea; these cultivated slopes, rich with olive and almond trees,

vines and fig trees; these towering hills, wooded and watching; this rarified, intoxicating air and brilliant sunshine—all was ours, richly to revel in. No one interfered with our solitude. And what can give greater delight than a solitude of two, where all is harmony? I am persuaded that we shall enjoy no visit on the island so much as this to Miramar.

I described our arrival on Saturday night: how quickly depression gave place to an opposite condition, and I passed from *Il Penseroso* to *L'Allegro*. It is a weakness of my mortal nature. One moment you might charitably accord me a *De Profundis*: the next, find me, like St. Cecilia, ready to draw an angel down. But we all have moral as well as physical infirmities. Would our consciences had no heavier burdens to carry.

I have related what took place yesterday morning when we awoke to new weather and a new world. How, on throwing wide the shutters, behold everything was fair and goodly, and we felt in Paradise.

H. C. looked up his ream of foolscap, but something withheld him, and he did not attempt to compose. We went through the necessary process of dressing, losing no end of time at the windows, revelling in this wonderful scene. Long before we were ready to go down, the old woman called up something from below, with that voice, which as I have already told you, would penetrate from the grand doorway of St. Peter's to its extreme end. We could not understand her, but afterwards guessed her meaning.

She had already appeared upon the scene with hot water and beautifully polished boots, just as if we had been in the most civilised inn in the world. She was quite motherly, too, and did not in the least mind the airy costume in which she surprised us. We felt that it would be wasted modesty on our part to mind also. H. C., it is true, thought it a loss of dignity, and a white apparition disappeared round the doorway into the next room: but when I informed the apparition that no breakfast was to be had, it quickly reasserted itself with emphasis and argument.

Many a true word is spoken in jest, and so it proved on this occasion.

Presently the old woman again called up the staircase, and we wondered what she had to say. Before this there had been a great row going on below; the sort of noise that had astonished and alarmed us last night. But we no longer feared the consequences; no longer dreaded dead corpses and bowie knives, and a general whirlwind of murders.

A few moments later and we beheld an interesting calvacade in the road.

The old man was seated on a mule, dressed in his Sunday's best: a picturesque costume, which seemed, like Joseph's coat, of many colours. Impossible to have known him for the old man who had

sat shaving at the table, making grimaces hideous enough to bring one to the verge of idiocy. He was now quite dignified and imposing, and the animal that bore him evidently felt its honour and responsibility; looked grave as a judge and almost as wise.

The whole family followed the mule, also in their best. The old woman, her daughter and granddaughter, the daughter's husband, the two neighbours who had come in last night for a chat and helped to hold the kettle as we sat round the charcoal fire.

It was a picturesque cavalcade, in strange harmony with the surrounding scenery. Hills and slopes seemed to have been made especially for it, and vice versa. Had the old man stood there long enough to be sketched, I might have sent you a charming view. You would not have lost your heart to him, but would have been delighted with the general effect: the tout-ensemble of this Miramar-Mallorcan, Sunday-going procession.

Both he, however, and his quadruped were impatient to be off: and each occasionally looked round to see what caused the delay. The old woman was giving us last and incomprehensible directions: immediately after which the door was slammed, and peace reigned in the house. A solemn silence, the more mysterious and appalling for the late commotion.

The cavalcade started and threw us nods and becks and wreathed smiles. The old woman nearly shook her head off, a semaphore language evidently meant to emphasize her final directions. The younger woman's glances were more captivating. Of course they were all meant for H. C. She kissed her hand also, but this was to a favourite cat that had been shut out of the Hospiteria, and sat blinking its eyes in the doorway. H. C., however, took it to himself, and blushed with delight. He is very vain. The husband, however, seemed jealous of the cat—or of H. C.—and took his wife to task. Some people, you know, are jealous of anything, whilst others will be jealous even of nothing. The madness of the green-eyed monster afflicts them and makes the food it feeds upon.

I don't know that he was so very much to blame, either, for the young woman was comely, and possibly susceptible. I always noticed that whenever H. C. was in the way, she was not very far off. No doubt she was slightly under the mesmeric influence of his poetical eyes, which, in fine frenzies, shine large and open, like the planets Venus and Mars: slightly different in size and colour, but all the more impressive for those to whom variety is charming.

We watched them down the road, and admired. The mule went at leisurely and stately pace, the others followed in orderly confusion. Though it had rained with such vigour all night through, the roads were almost as dry as though there had been no downpour and no torrent. The fresh morning breeze fanned their cheeks and waved their locks and fluttered their garments. It was

all exhilarating, delicious, primitive : a quiet, calm, unworldly, ideal existence. These were so many Adams and Eves in Paradise. Yes, in spite of the salutation wasted to the cat and appropriated by H. C., I assert it fearlessly.

Whither bound so early ? Whither bound at all ? This was easily divined ; and we ought to have been ready to accompany them, if only to see the little congregation that dwelt in the dependencies of the Archduke.

It was Sunday morning, and they were on the road to church : the small church or chapel adjoining the Archduke's residence.

Here these simple people worship, in sound of the tideless sea, often in sight of it also ; the blue heavens above them. For the chapel is small, and some of the congregation remain outside and go through their service in the open air. The grandest edifice, the most sumptuous ritual, could never create so devotional a frame of mind as this blue dome, with the whispering trees and the murmuring sea for music. No ceremonial is needed here. Still, the people are superstitious, according to their lights ; and though, perhaps, unconsciously influenced by the beauties of nature, are more directly impressed by the priest, the altar, and the censer.

Our cavalcade went down the road, and presently might be seen winding through the sloping paths leading to the chapel. When we had duly inhaled all this beauty, this breezy call of incense-breathing morn, H. C., the poetical—and practical—suggested breakfast.

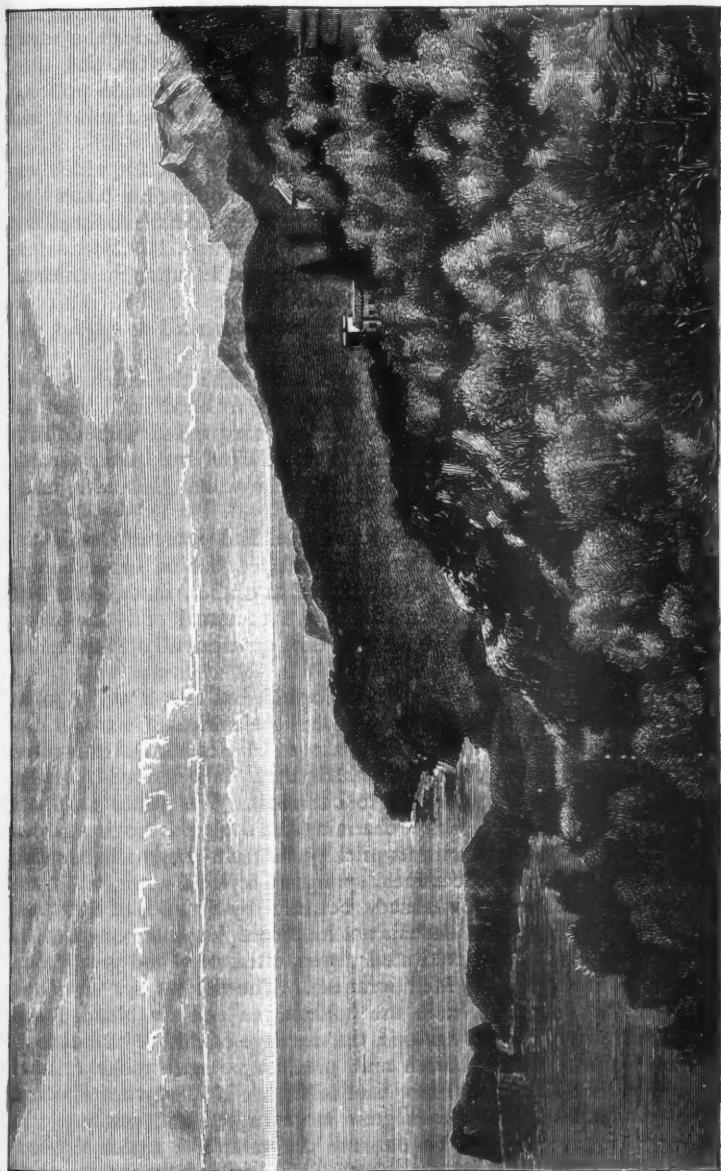
We went down. Silence and emptiness met us ; terms that might be applied to ourselves as well as to the house. Silence and emptiness, but no sign of breakfast. All doors were open except the front door. In fact, I think the front door was the only door in the lower regions : the others were only doorways.

We wandered through the rooms like troubled spirits. There was fire enough in the kitchen, any number of mysterious pots and pans, but to touch one of them was as much as life was worth. So we made a merit of necessity, opened the front door, let in the cat, let out ourselves, and wandered about the grounds : devoutly hoping the priest would be merciful and not keep them too long at church.

The old woman was the first to return. Evidently her conscience pricked her, and she had hastily told her beads. Perhaps this was what she had called up the stairs, just before leaving : exhorting us to patience and she would not tarry. Before long she had brewed us some of our own tea and boiled the inevitable eggs.

There was no milk to be had ; there never is any milk in these parts ; and we took our tea without it : a decoction neither wholesome nor pleasant. But they had packed up no coffee in Palma, and but for our own private supplies of tea, we should have been driven to make the best of water or wine.

H. C. groaned, looked cavernous, and suggested an immediate return to England. A land without milk and butter was worse than



A PORTION OF THE VIEW FROM OUR WINDOWS AT THE HOSPITERIA.

heathendom. I told him that he ought to look upon this as one of the trials of life, and he quite brightened up under the idea; deliberately rasped his tongue with strong undiluted tea, and then declared that he felt a martyr and happy. He also made up for it by such ravages upon our scanty larder that I grew alarmed, and suggested portioning out our stock of provisions.

The woman had brought from our store a small chicken, which was nothing but bones, and the remnant of a sheep, nothing but bones also. She asked us rather satirically which bones we would have for breakfast and which for luncheon. It was a choice of evils. H. C. tossed up—his usual habit when undecided—and the lot fell upon the chicken.

"Please devil it," he said.

She must have understood that it was a wicked word, for she crossed herself and fled from the room.

Presently she returned with a steaming dish: the chicken done up in curried rice, and made twice as hot as need have been, no doubt with a view to carrying out H. C.'s expressed wishes. But she had certainly made of the whole a delicious and savoury mess. Our spirits revived, and we went out feeling, like Alexander, ready to conquer the world.

Before this, the rest of the cavalcade had returned, with the exception of the young girl, who had stayed behind somewhere—perhaps to see her brother, a young servant of the Archduke's. The house had resumed its normal condition of sound and occupancy. It was as noisy and lively as, in our own quarters, all was quiet and deserted.

We went out upon a very lovely world, but not a world to be conquered. It was difficult to imagine the elements of war and discord here as we sauntered down the road the cavalcade had taken in the early morning, and by which they had returned. Hills, wooded and romantic, towered to our right. We passed a solitary house by the roadside, with a charming but neglected-looking garden full of the cactus plant, with its prickly-pear fruit. Dry walls bounded the road, and from an occasional spring ran icy-cold water, whilst the almost natural fountain was made beautiful by a wealth of ferns and fronds: the delicate maidenhair not least conspicuous amongst them.

On the left, rich and cultivated slopes, often steep and precipitous, led far down to the blue Mediterranean. The tideless sea stretched away and away, until, lost in the horizon, sea and sky blended and dissolved into a harmony of one, the marriage of earth with heaven.

We came to cliffs barren and precipitous, and rocky terraces where the olive trees were now bare of fruit. Half way down, where the terraces ceased, the slopes grew more rugged and pathless. In front, a huge rock stretched out into the water like a sleeping lion. It looked far off and inaccessible, and in a wild moment we agreed to go down the slopes and scale the summit of this rocky fortress.

Away we went, jumping over dry walls from terrace to terrace,

laughing at the loose stones that every now and then caused us to miss our footing and sent us rolling onwards half a dozen yards or so. It was harder work on the bare cliffs, but there was no turning back, and it was keenest enjoyment. Near the sea a long white road gave evidence of some sort of civilisation. But nowhere was there any vestige of mankind.

We rounded huge boulders of cliff, ponderous enough to shake the world if they would only fall. Water dripped from them in icy and not very pleasant showers, as we passed under them. On reaching the sea level we were repaid for this mad escapade. Of course the tug of war would be in returning. It was all very well to get down the cliff, but how about getting up again?

Without troubling with hard problems, we took the good we saw before us. The rock ahead had to be scaled and our mission completed.

Above, it had looked small and insignificant. Now it had grown to great size, and jutted out into the blue sea like a promontory. The summit, pointed and narrow, resembled the backbone of a shark. Could we reach the end without rolling over, to make a great splash and find an unrecorded grave in the water that could be cruel or kindly, according to its moods and variations?

I wish I could so describe the scene that you might in some degree realise it as we did. Make you see the blueness of the sky; feel the warmth and brilliancy of the sunshine; hear the soothing splash of the water; inhale the rarified, intoxicating air, which affected one like champagne; made us wild and boyish and daring, light and free as the soaring lark, altogether and perfectly happy; just as if this would last for ever; as if there were no world without, no cares, heartaches, or headaches in existence. Do you not dread the morrow of those days when you feel particularly well or especially happy? In this instance is not the old saying often reversed, and coming events cast sunshine instead of shadow before them?

The white sand dazzled in the sunlight with a million sparkling grains that shone like diamond points. Over this rolled the Mediterranean, smooth, foaming and white-edged. Not the ebb and flow of other seas, but the soothing roll of waters fanned into motion by the soft southern winds of Heaven. To climb the rock was harder work than we had forseen, for no trodden path or rocky steps guided the way. It was very rough and rugged, and we often had to retrace our steps on reaching a point that hardly a goat or a coney would have hazarded.

But the rock was full of grandeur. Ferns adorned it wherever they could find roothold in nooks and broken crevices; and wild heath flowers, strong and hardy, were worthy of their rocky soil. Of course we picked a supply of souvenirs; and of course the usual fate will overtake them. Before we get back to England, they will have scattered and departed—with last year's hopes and garlands.

Upwards and onwards ; but we soon found that an attempt to get to the extreme end would be a pilgrimage. A pilgrimage, moreover, that would not atone for our sins, but rather add to them.

It was a dangerous expedition ; and however personally valueless our lives might be, we felt that afar off we both had those who watched and waited for our return ; who took some interest in us, if it was nothing more than Mrs. Jellaby's interest in Africa and Borrioboola Gha—the hope of making us better than we were. In short, of converting the heathen. Why will people attempt the impossible ?

So when we had reached a high nook, with a seat soft as rock could make it, and a smooth back evidently designed for the purpose, we came to an anchor and rested from our toil.

I shall never forget that rest ; that absolute repose.

It was Sunday, and a Sabbath stillness filled the air, and even a sound of bells ; that imaginary sound so often heard at the margin of the sea, which seems to come we know not whence and go we know not whither ; and puzzles us and sets us wondering ; sets us longing, like the song of a syren, to plunge into the waves and search for all this sense of sound, this hidden mystery.

We lay there bathed in sunshine, inhaling the soft sea breezes, revelling in the intense blue of the sky. It was the luxury of a refined existence. Our very solitude added a thousand-fold to the charms of this wide and high expanse. On either side, the cliffs were grand and wild, the coast was broken and uneven. Tongues of land stretched point beyond point. Down a great height of perpendicular cliff tumbled and tossed the loveliest of waterfalls, all spray and foam and fantastic grace. If anything in these southern climes could remind one of Norway, it was this. In those northern latitudes, I had seen hundreds of falls of which this might be an exact counterpart. The great storm of Saturday had no doubt swelled the torrent, and for the moment the body of water was formidable.

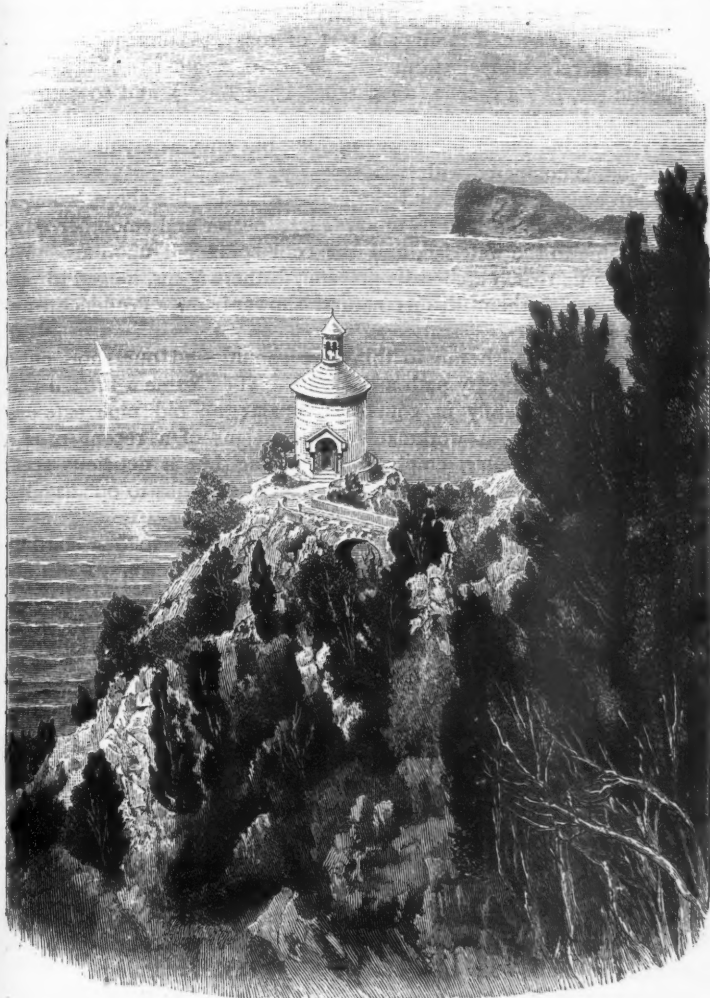
H. C. murmured something about Aphrodite's robe, but I stopped him at once, for he was verging on dangerous ground. If the intoxication of a fine frenzy seized him on this pinnacle of rock, it was certain that those over in England might watch and wait for him in vain, like so many Mariannas in a moated grange. In his unconverted state, the thought was agony.

Time passed unheeded. What could be more exquisite enjoyment ? All the dreams of the lotos eater, without his guilty conscience. If this existence would only go on for ever ! All about us the blue, flashing, murmuring sea : a soothing song of nature set to the accompaniment of a soft west wind, which fanned our "fevered brows," tempered the hot sunshine, and went onwards to rustle and whisper amongst the far off wooded hills.

Nothing lasts for ever. We had to give up dreaming and come back to earth, but it was only going from beauty to beauty. Now

began the climb down this slippery height ; jumping from rock to rock and risking many a downfall.

It all came right in the end. We felt a little stiff and a good deal



MIRAMAR.

bruised ; and H. C. tore his clothes and looked like the boy in the "Vagabond : " homeless, ragged and tanned. But as Mr. Toots says, it was not of much consequence ; there was no one to see ; and

no doubt the comely and intelligent woman at the Hospiteria was not less ready with her needle than with her wit. Of course he wore a coat, and I will allow you to suppose that it was his coat that had suffered.

I escaped, but then I weigh just half as much as H. C., and where he took to sliding and rolling: a sort of rocky, Mallorcan tobogganing: I merely jumped from one point to another on the light fantastic toe, like a gazelle (do gazelles have toes?), and so got over the ground. H. C. politely likened me to a scapegoat and himself to a respectable sheep, but it was nothing but envy at my unshattered condition as compared with his.

Down at last, we wandered along the road by the shore, wondering whether it would lead us upwards by a nearer and smoother way.

We came to the waterfall, and the cool spray fell upon us. We listened to its roar, watched its graceful, feathery forms, longed to precipitate ourselves beneath this natural shower-bath. Prudence withheld us.

We went on, and began to think we should find our short cut a very long one, our easy path a delusion. Then came a broken part of the road, evidently in course of repair: an old pipe carefully placed in a nook; a workman's jacket; signs of a recent fire; a suggestive bottle—alas, empty of everything but a delicious scent of strong waters, that might have given fresh stimulus to our flagging energies.

All the same we took heart of grace, went back to our starting-point, began to climb up the way we had come down. I will not pretend that it was not hard work, yet we delighted in it. If I suffer for it afterwards, I generally find myself equal to these occasions. Only, someday it may be that I shall try it once too often.

I was always ahead of H. C., who was everlastingly stopping and turning round, pretending to admire the scene, but in reality pausing for breath. At every terrace, I was always the one to scale first the dry walls, and hold out a helping hand. Thus, in this world, the mouse over and over again helps the lion. That fable is full of wisdom.

The high road at last; and, comparing notes, we found our mad excursion had taken five hours out of our day. But mad or sane, I think they will prove five of the most delicious hours we shall spend in Mallorca.

Only one thing troubled us. Paolo's defections, and the consequent state of our larder. As hungry as a hunter is an ordinary saying, but we had done much more than a hunter's work this morning.

Going leisurely up the road, we came to the picturesque, deserted-looking house already mentioned, its wild garden enclosed in dry and crumbling walls. A sundial upon the house told the hours. Nearly all these Mallorcan houses have sundials.

H. C. thought he would sketch it, and I, nothing loth to rest, perched myself on the dry wall beside him and looked on.

This did not please him. I must work, too; and he commanded me to cross the road, lay siege to the garden and bring him some prickly pears to eat.

There was nothing for it but to obey. The first thing I did was to catch my foot in a tangle, tumble headlong into half a dozen cactus plants, and cover myself from head to foot with a thousand tantalising darts, the small weapons of the prickly-pear; so minute that you can hardly see them, yet so sharp that you feel as if a whole needle manufactory had been discharged upon you.

Revenge tarried not. I brought back half a dozen fine prickly pears, which H. C. seized and devoured without due caution. The consequence was, that whilst my darts were all on the surface, his were all inside—a far worse state of things, as you may imagine. The contortions of St. Sebastien in the Town Hall at Palma were simply studies of grace compared with H. C.'s violent emotions and horrible grimaces.

Whilst sketching, the Archduke came down on a small white horse, and was very kind and amiable. Somehow, I thought of Sintram. He told us many things; amongst others, that this solitary house had once been inhabited by the Patron Saint of Mallorca. We ventured to narrate our driver's bad conduct, and our fear of famine. He was full of sympathy; seemed to think we were already sufficiently emaciated; and was good enough to intimate that our larder should be no further cause of anxiety to us. I need not tell you how much I felt and appreciated a kindness tendered with such delicacy that it seemed to do away with all obligation. It is certain that but for the hospitable intent of His Royal Highness, we should have suffered the martyrdom of hunger.

We told the Archduke how we had spent our morning. He laughed, and wondered that we had voluntarily given ourselves so much hard work. We might have done it all much more easily and by an ordinary road. But we explained that with the inconsistency of human nature, we felt that without this hard work the excursion would have lost half its charm.

By this time the sketch was finished, with a fine foreground of cactus and prickly pears, very sympathetically put in, the darts as large as porcupine quills. Soon after we came to the Hospiteria. The old woman greeted us as she might have greeted life from the dead. You see we had ordered our bones for one o'clock, and it was now past four. I thought the younger woman would have embraced H. C. in her joy at his safety, but happily for the interests of morality and my own peace of mind, her husband came in at that moment, and she subsided.

Time having gone on to this hour, we satisfied our present wants with dry bread and wine, and ordered a more substantial repast for six or seven o'clock. It was very much like children playing at giving a dinner party, and treating each other to empty dishes with delicious

names to them. Our larder was empty; and our repast depended upon a promise lately given, but that I felt sure would not fail.

A curious apparition now made its appearance: a tall, cadaverous-looking monk, in brown cloak and cowl.

His face was kindly and placid, but its expression suggested that the mind within was not quite strong and sound. A fixed smile gave the face a childlike look, a little painful to see. Nothing charms more than the frankness of childhood, but there is a time for everything. The seven ages of man each have their signs and tokens, and each in turn must give place to the other.

Yet this simple face was of a type that ought to have been intelligent. He came up, made signs, talked, and pointed vigorously towards the hills above us. We could only imagine that there must be some monastery in the woods on the mountain side, which he was inviting us to visit. We found that it was so. But for the time being one could only shake one's head and acquiesce in what was said by this curious old monk. He seemed quite satisfied, and went off happy and contented. We watched him cross the road with long strides, pass through the small gateway, and disappear into the wood.

We also went out again, but the shadows were lengthening, and before long night would be upon us. There is very little twilight here; the light that in England is so pleasant and romantic, lingers long, yet is so inexpressibly sad. A solitary English landscape, in the gloaming amongst the solemn trees, is haunted by a sense of oppression that is almost like death itself. Those trees, with their silent shadows, put on a mysterious look and influence from which I have to fly as for life. The sea, on the contrary, at all hours of the day or night, gives one a sense of companionship: and in sound of the restless ocean, in the most solitary hour of life, one would never feel lonely or alone.

Returning to the Hospiteria, we found its sacred precincts invaded by new comers, and resented this as a personal affront.

Of course we had no right to do so, but on these occasions who stops to think of right or wrong? Equally of course we concealed our real feelings under a calm and polite exterior. H. C. indeed was quite gushing in his emotion. We had come across these people in Palma; they were Germans of the German; and he greeted them as if he had known them with bosom intimacy for a hundred years. This was very wrong of him, and made me long to administer a few more prickly pears.

To the great joy of one of us, they said they had made up their minds not to stay. The place was dull and dreary and uncivilised. "Positively no sheets to the beds!" they cried, with horror. "We are not disciples of Dr. Jaeger. How can you endure it?"

I did not say that we were more than happy and contented; our wants more than abundantly supplied; that the beds *had* sheets (was it

wicked to withhold this information?); that our stay in this Hospiteria of Miramar, for some strange reason, would be marked in our life's record with a white stone.

We had so enjoyed our solitude that this invasion seemed nothing less than laying siege to our happiness. Again I say that we were unreasonable; had no earthly right to feel thus. But I can only confess my sins and shortcomings, and hold up to you a faithful mirror of my daily life in these regions—within prudent limits of course. Anything especially indiscreet is buried in the profoundest depths of my inner consciousness.

Truth to say, it would be difficult, in this small island, leading



WHERE I FELL AMONGST THE PRICKLY PEARS.

our quiet lives, to err very far from the world's path of conventional rectitude. This is a sentence overweighted with long words that are not, I suppose, pure Saxon. But a weighty subject is worthy of exceptional treatment.

And after all, I am only describing my own emotions. H. C. is omniverous in the way of companionship, and devours all he comes across. I have failed in everything, if I have failed to show you that he has great powers of adaptation, and can put up equally with fish, flesh, fowl or good red herring. I dare say he is right in the main: it is useless to pretend that I can go and do likewise.

So when these good people declared that after a little refreshment they meant to return to Palma, I felt quite a philanthropic glow toward them, and was ready to minister to their needs as far as our humble board permitted. The lady sat in the refectory with her

umbrella up, as a precaution against draughts. But they were independent of contributions, and were far better provisioned than ourselves. Or, rather, than we had been. For, thanks to the goodness of the Archduke, famine no longer stared us in the face. Our evening meal was sumptuous in comparison with what had gone before.

Presently the new arrivals went away, and we speeded the parting guests. The last we saw of them was the lady's umbrella, still held up as a precaution against the draughts of the road.

Our evening passed quietly. The domestic scenes of the previous night were absent. Things never quite repeat themselves. To-night, somehow, though dressed in their Sunday's best, they were not so interesting; had put on their Sunday manners; a certain stiffness due to nothing more formidable than a change of costume.

They were in greater force also. Neighbours had come in and asserted their influence in a chorus of sounds that did not at all resemble a concert of nightingales.

Whilst we dined at one table and one end of the room, these good people dined at the other table and the other end of the room. It was amusing to watch their ways and manners: interesting not as models, but as certain phases.

Night had fallen; lamps were lighted, and threw their ghostly shadows about the room. Lighted up also the faces of these our entertainers, with an effect to which Schalken and Rembrandt would have done honour: the one reproducing the effects of light, the other those of darkness.

Presently we went up to our rooms, and took out our books. H. C. filled in a sketch. In time a ghostly hour struck. Everything in the house had become silent; the peace of repose; the quiet of sleep, which is so like death. We, too, sought oblivion: but to one of us it did not come. All night long my dreams were haunted by the beauties of Miramar, and all through the dark hours I lived again in the past day.

This morning brought the Archduke, and we were able to thank his Royal Highness once more for having come to our rescue. We spent nearly the whole morning with him.

He took us to the most interesting points on his estate; paths and nooks and striking coup-d'œils we should never otherwise have seen; showed us all over his house, with its interesting collections of Mallorcan curiosities and antiquities. Wonderful old cabinets and coffres; magnificently carved old bedsteads; a great collection of real majolica; a good deal of quaint old glass. But I cannot tell you of half we saw. He initiated us into the mysteries of the beer and wine of the country, the former of which H. C. so greatly appreciated that the Archduke insisted upon despatching some of it to the Hospiteria. In vain we assured him that we should return to Palma before many hours had passed.

He showed us all the beauty of his grounds and gardens, plucked

us roses, and introduced me to the fruit of the arbutus, which is finer here than in England. His conversation was varied and delightful; he seemed to speak all languages alike. He also showed us his collection of photographs, taken with his own camera, which immediately put me out of all conceit with ours. I have rarely seen photographs so beautiful and effective, and I fear that I coveted some of them. They gave one so wonderfully correct an idea of Mallorca, both place and people. As the Archduke observed, these photographs are inartistic and unsatisfying compared with one's personal sketches, but it is not everyone who possesses his talent for drawing and etching.

So the moments flew in golden grains until we found ourselves back in the Hospiteria, and our stay drawing to a close.

Before leaving, we determined to go up into the mountain and search for the little monastery. We plunged into the wood, and the path was sufficiently indicated to prevent our going very far astray.

We came at last to a small building perched on the hill side, overlooking the lovely sea and coast. It looked poverty stricken, and it is so. This monastery is all that remains of great wealth; of a day when the monks of Mallorca had power and a history, and ruled very much as they willed.

So the little building takes one back in imagination to far off days, when the monks would have disdained so poor a shelter. For the sake of that past it is interesting.

We rang a bell, which echoed loudly in all the surrounding quiet; pealed and echoed, and nothing more. It brought forth no response. Were the monks all dead or sleeping? We wandered round, and I suppose came to sacred precincts: a small vegetable garden. Outside the doorway of the house sat an old, old monk; toothless, apparently voiceless; wrinkled and curved and marked with hoary hairs. Such a pitiable object! Pitiable because apparently so helpless; all hope in life over; simply waiting for the end. Your heart would have bled for him.

He was cobbling away at an old garment: an old brown cloak with the inevitable capuchon, so suggestive of sandals, and penitential fasts, and lacerations of the flesh, and death to the world. He looked up as we came upon him, started violently, seemed frightened, and finally disappeared. Whether through a trap door, or up a chimney, or through a window, the evaporation was so sudden and mysterious, we never knew. It was probably forbidden him to look upon the face of man, and he would have to do penance for our sin in finding him out.

But having discovered that the place was inhabited, we went back and gave another vigorous pull to the bell. This time it brought forth our old friend the monk, who seemed overjoyed to see us again, and welcomed us with effusion.

Within, the place was bare and cold, with every sign and symptom

of poverty about it. In the refectory, the table was spread for the monks: some six or eight places in all. Each plate was covered with a coarse napkin, and beneath each napkin was a little hard brown bread and a few olives. A tumbler of cold water stood beside each plate. Could anything less keep body and soul together? Can these poor monks indeed be said to possess a body which is generally composed not of a mere skeleton only, but of certain proportions of flesh and blood?

In the small passages were the few cells of the few monks. Our guide opened one. It was empty. The poor inmate had gone to its rest and its account. What temptations could possibly assail it here? Of what sins could it be guilty? The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—these must have been dead and stifled long since in such an atmosphere.

The small chapel possessed neither wealth nor superfluous ornament.

Our guide opened the harmonium in the gallery and begged us to play. But the very sound of music startled us and seemed as out of place as the Dead March at a wedding, or the Wedding March at a funeral. We went through a solemn air, whilst our simple guide bent his head in listening attitude full of devotion, as if he could hear something beyond those strains; a melody closed to our less ethereal ears.

We shut it up and went down. Already the bell was tolling a sad, monotonous call to vespers. As we looked down the passage, the monks flitted out of their cells like broken images of resignation, cowed and noiseless of tread, and disappeared to their places in the chapel.

They had their service to themselves, for we were turning away. The simple monk led us through the garden, picked us a few flowers, and pointed to the celestial view over land and sea—for I can hardly think the word misplaced. Then he conducted us to the outer gate and gave us a blessing: and the small dole we left in his hand must have been more than welcome.

He closed the gate, and we saw him walk up the path and disappear within the little monastery, where these monks pass a veritable death-in-life existence. I have seen many monasteries, but none that impressed me so sadly as this small refuge in the Mallorcan hills.

We found our way down to the Hospiteria. Paolo awaited us with the carriage, looking as innocent and unconcerned as if he had not been perverse and faithless. He manifested no surprise at seeing us alive, though he ought to have expected to find nothing but famished corpses to take back to Palma. He was very officious in helping with the luggage, and tried to put on quite a friendly and benign expression.

We took leave of our friends and the Hospiteria, and departed with a strangely reluctant heart. I cannot tell you how sorry I was

to leave Miramar. Instead of three days, we longed to devote a month to it. Paolo cracked his whip and away we went up the hill, out of sight and sound of the sea.

We clattered into Valdemosa, of which, for the first time, we saw and appreciated the grand and romantic beauty. Hills towered on all sides, grave, sombre and majestic. The town bridged the chasm between the chains, and filled up the valley. Its houses looked old and crumbling and lichen-stained: that picturesque and peculiar look only time and weather will give.

The street we passed through was narrow and uneven. At a large covered well or fountain, some dozen or fifteen women were washing clothes, laughing and talking, full of admiration for the barouche: though H. C. would tell you a different tale. There was no time to sketch them, but we took their photograph, and I wish we could have recorded their animated tones and gestures also.

They were delighted at the operation. Nothing pleases them more, wherever you go.

I suppose they look upon it somewhat in the light of fame. If they know nothing about it, at least, they have a certain sense or feeling of going out into the world and becoming known. Some of them, indeed, are pretty enough to create a sensation in a book of Beauties, and, if these are the exception, they are only following in the way of the world; for where are beauties not the exception?

On this occasion they went back to their washing for the express purpose of being taken characteristically, put themselves into poses, and for a moment hushed their voices and laughter, and evidently felt the importance of the ceremony. Then, when it was all over, they broke out again like a Greek chorus: perhaps not quite so classical, and yet nothing could have been more ancient-looking, classical and beautiful than our present surroundings: and went back to their curious examination of the camera from a respectful distance, and their unmistakable glances of admiration at H. C.

He went up to them—to thank them, as he said: and I thought they would never have let him come away again. Of course, it was his own fault; he had bearded the lion in his own den; gone deliberately into the enemy's camp; but I have no doubt he enjoyed it very much. They formed a ring round him and danced and sang, just as I have seen the old fish-wives do in some of the ancient sea-ports of France, when one very much above them comes rashly into their midst. In those instances the enviable captive has never been released under penalty—or reward?—of a chaste salute from the leader of the van: and comely and picturesque as those fish wives are, with their costume, and frills and gold ornaments, and faces shining with health, many a ransom might be less willingly paid.

In this case I will not tell you whether there was any ransom or not. Why should I reveal secrets and declare exquisite emotions? I will only say that when I had carefully and deliberately packed up our

machine, restored everything to its place and was ready to depart, H. C. emerged from this crowd of Hebes, flushed, excited and radiant ; and my only regret was that I had disposed of the camera, and was unable to take a facsimile of him as he then and there appeared.

In a future letter I must send you a sketch of one of these busy scenes, which are so eminently Mallorcan. The well or washing place is a long, low building, often roofed with red tiles and supported by rough pillars. Here the women stand in a long row, or all round an immense stone trough, where they wash their linen and laugh and chatter, and seem altogether happy and contented. Of course such encounters as the above form the fête-days of their existence, and give them food for thought and badinage, and silent contemplation of blissful moments.

After all, the Rose of Love must be plucked in the morning of life. The afternoon comes when all things couleur-de-rose have faded, and poetry has become prose, and the voice of the charmer has ceased to charm wisely ; our fool's paradise disappears and DISILLUSION reigns in its stead.

But romance ought to linger long in Valdemosa. The very air you breathe is laden with it. The very aspect of the place is unrivalled. Its cypresses and orange trees, its almonds and olives, give it a rich and unfamiliar aspect. The hills tower around, all shapes and forms and heights, chain after chain. The white clouds obscure them for a moment and pass away, and the blue sky reigns triumphant, making glad your heart, so that all your pulses sing for joy. And what a joy ! Oh, this world is good to live in ! And there are moments of purest ecstasy amongst these beauties and solitudes of nature that you would not barter for a King's crown or a Jew's ransom. If time would only stand still, and the world be ever young, and youth and hope and feeling be ever fresh and fair !

But the sun never stands still or goes back. All passes away ; just as we passed away that afternoon from Valdemosa ; and left the laughing girls at the fountain ; laughing no longer, but throwing sighs and regrets after H. C., which he echoed and repeated until I almost grew melancholy myself.

On we went, down, down, past the wonderful old olive trees that take every fantastic shape you can imagine : often grotesque to hideousness, yet curious and interesting. On through the rich Palma plains, with their olives and almonds ; and so into Palma town.

The aristocratic rumble of our barouche rolling through the streets startled the air, and the place became animated. The sound was too well known to be mistaken. Who passed that way ?

Windows flew open, doors were flung back ; we made quite a royal progress.

"Shall I bow right and left ?" said H. C. "They seem to expect it." But at that very moment my beautiful tripod beneath his feet

gave way, and he collapsed like a telescope and disappeared. The people thought it conjuring, and applauded. I felt humiliated. Our royal progress was being turned into a mere mountebank exhibition. However, all was well. The king can do no wrong. Nothing but honour could attend the barouche.

At the Fonda de Mallorca we received an ovation from its collected inmates. And here we are once more. The success of this excursion has only made us the more anxious for the next.

It is very pleasant to get back to our old quarters. After the solitude of Miramar, we feel amongst a great crowd of people in a large city. We have returned to civilisation. H. C. at the table d'hôte this evening felt himself on Olympus, indulging in nectar and ambrosia. He passed nothing, and declared that the Trois Frères in Paris could never equal the Fonda de Mallorca.

It is night. Such a night. An ethereal, dark blue dome, stars like saucers (an unpoetical but I hope graphic comparison), balmy airs and a tideless sea stretching away in unseen immensity; a cathedral in sable outlines, looking grander and more imposing than ever.

We have enjoyed it all on the ramparts, where, as usual, H. C. led me to the verge of pitfalls and precipices. When we returned, I distinctly saw the poetical mood coming on. So after he had brewed some tea, and ordered a quart of milk, to make up for its absence at Miramar, I recommended him to retire before his brain grew too excited for repose. He is amenable, and away he went, leaving me with windows open to the night air, and to the enjoyment of some quiet hours, which, as usual, I have devoted to you.

I have grown to feel at home here, and to like this bare and plain little room. I hear, too, Il Sereno coming down the street, announcing not a ghostly hour, but one much nearer cockcrow. I hear his tread, see the swing of his lantern, and the ghostly shadows it casts; I catch the rhythm of his cry.

"Oh, watchman, what of the night? what of the night?" my spirit cries in return. "After the NIGHT of DEATH, whither, oh, whither, shall we wake to the MORNING of LIGHT?"

Let me away to oblivion before my mood changes to melancholy. I would rather send you sunshine than shadow. But, come noon or night, chance or change, good or ill, life or death, to you, and to *her*, our BELOVED, in time and eternity, I am unchangeable.

I cannot wish you Good-night, for it is morning; but here, as I hope to one day in some happier clime, I wish you Good-morrow.



A LAST CHANCE.

ON a certain morning in September, 1865, Monsieur Aristide Mouron, a retired mercer, occupying a third floor in the Rue Turenne, received a letter by the early post.

"Singular!" he remarked, partly to himself, partly to his daughter, a pretty blonde who was sitting near him, engaged with some fancy work; "I don't know the handwriting. No," he added, peering at the address through his spectacles, "I certainly never saw it before."

"Hadn't you better open it, father?" said Mlle. Claire in a slightly impatient tone.

"All in good time my dear," replied M. Mouron, still staring at the envelope in profound meditation. Then, carefully extracting from it the enclosed epistle, he looked at the signature. "Victor Duhamel," he exclaimed. "What can he have to say to me?"

"Read it, papa, and we shall know," quietly suggested the young lady.

"'Monsieur,' slowly began the old gentleman, "'you will doubtless be surprised on receiving this,'—What a hand he writes; positively copperplate! He ought to be book-keeper in some big house of business, but unfortunately he isn't. Let me see, where was I?—'On receiving this, and be disposed to consider the request I am about to make to you an act of presumption. But even a refusal is preferable to suspense, and I can control my feelings no longer.'—I haven't the remotest idea what he means!"

"Read a little further," insinuated his daughter. "We shall soon see."

"'In a word, I love Mademoiselle Claire, and have reason to believe that the attachment is reciprocal!' Eh, what?" cried M. Mouron, with a sudden start that nearly overset his chair. "Is this true or do my eyes deceive me?"

"Perfectly true, papa."

"That he has the audacity to love you, and actually presumes to think——"

"That I love him in return," supplemented Mlle. Claire. "Certainly he does, and only waits for your consent to our marriage."

"How do you know that?"

"Because he told me yesterday he intended to ask you for it."

"Indeed! Then you may tell him that I distinctly refuse to hear another word on the subject. A young fellow without a sou!"

"That is no fault of his," remonstrated Claire. "Besides, if he has no fortune, he is sure to make one. You have said so yourself."

"I?"

"Yes, I have often heard you compliment him on his literary

attainments, and say that he was certain to make his way in the world."

"If I did, it does not follow that I should choose him for a son-in-law. If he had only something in hand to begin with!"

"That is just what we are coming to," said Claire. "The end of his letter explains everything."

"Ah! you seem to know all about it."

"Of course I do. I have a copy of it in my pocket."

"In that case," replied M. Mouron in a half-amused, half angry tone, taking up the letter as he spoke, "I may as well know it too. 'My sole object in life is to be the husband of Mademoiselle Claire, but not until I am able to offer her a position in some degree worthy of her. To the accomplishment of my desire, every faculty I possess will henceforth be devoted, and I am confident of success. One year's probation is all I ask. At its expiration, I pledge myself either to bring you a sum of twenty thousand francs as an earnest of what I hope to do in the future, or at once to renounce all claim to your daughter's hand.' H'm," concluded M. Mouron, "twenty thousand francs isn't much, but the lad speaks fairly enough."

"Wouldn't it be better, papa," slyly suggested Claire, "to hear what he has to say? He is not far off."

"How do you know where he is?"

"Because it has just struck nine, and at that hour he was to be in the street opposite our house."

Then, without waiting for an answer, she opened the window and made a sign which was evidently expected, for a minute or two later the servant announced "Monsieur Victor Duhamel."

On the entrance of his visitor, M. Mouron assumed a majestic air, and acknowledged the young man's respectful salutation by a patronising wave of the hand.

"Pray be seated, Monsieur Victor," he began, affecting a dignified ease of manner, but in reality hardly less embarrassed than the individual he addressed. "I have perused your letter—a most creditable specimen of penmanship, I must say—and gather from it that you are—ahem—desirous of obtaining my consent to your marriage with my daughter."

Victor bowed assent. "It is my fondest hope," he replied.

"I will not deny," pursued the ex-mercator, "that I had other views—financially more advantageous—for her. But under the circumstances," here his hatchety features relaxed into something between a smile and a grin: "I might be disposed to waive my objections and accept your conditions, if I saw any reasonable chance of your fulfilling them."

"I assure you," said Duhamel, "that —"

"Excuse me," interrupted M. Mouron, "but a few questions are indispensable. May I ask what are your present means of existence?"

"My salary as a clerk in a government office, amounting to a hundred and five francs a month."

"Total, twelve hundred and sixty francs a-year. No other resource?"

"None. My earnings have hitherto sufficed for my wants, and I have even economised a few hundred francs out of them. Henceforth it will be different. I shall resign my situation to-day, and depend upon my own exertions."

"They may possibly bring you in less," said M. Mouron with an ominous shake of the head. "And your projects for the future, what are they?"

"To utilize the excellent education I have received, and turn my knowledge to account. I am well acquainted with the principal modern languages, and speak them fluently; the classics have always been my favourite study; and in my leisure hours I have acquired some proficiency in the oriental tongues. Besides, I have a natural taste for painting, and have even dabbled in chemistry. With so many chances in my favour, one at least ought to serve my turn."

"I hope it may," returned M. Mouron doubtfully; "but in my business twenty thousand francs were not so easily gained. However, it rests with you to succeed or fail. To-day is the fifteenth of September, 1865; on this day next year, if you have kept your word, I will keep mine. Until then, adieu."

"You believe in me still, Mademoiselle?" said Victor, with a parting glance at Claire as he left the room.

"With all my heart and for ever," was her reply.

Ten months after the above recorded interview, a young man, the occupant of a miserable attic in the Leopoldstadt, the poorest quarter of Vienna, was sitting in a despondent attitude at a rickety deal table, on which lay an unfinished letter. His pale and careworn features bore the unmistakable marks of suffering and privation, and he sighed deeply as he threw down his pen.

"I cannot do it," he muttered, in a voice broken by emotion. "The task is too hard, too cruel. And yet I must release her from this fatal engagement, which I once insanely hoped would be a source of happiness to both. Those who have struggled as I have can alone know what it has cost me to bear up against the consciousness of failure, and, still despairing, cling to the delusive visions conjured up by a disordered brain! A few words more will tell the tale, and they must be written."

With a look of inexpressible anguish, he read over the commencement of his letter, and had already taken up his pen to continue it, when the door opened gently, and a stout, thickset personage with a frank and pleasant countenance entered the room.

"Herr Victor," said the new comer in German, "pardon the intrusion. Not having met you for some days, I feared you might

be ill, and came to see if I could be of any service. You work too hard, my good friend, and overtax your strength. Take a doctor's advice and come with me. We will dine together, and a stroll in the Prater will do you no harm."

"You are very kind, Herr Rieger," replied Duhamel with a faint attempt at a smile; "but I feel so weak and dispirited that ——"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed his visitor, as a sudden thought struck him. "I see it all now: you have eaten nothing to-day?"

Victor hid his face in his hands. "Nor yesterday," he faltered out. "I have not a kreutzer left."

"That at least can be remedied," said the Doctor; "and the sooner the better. Put on your hat and come. When we have dined, you shall tell me your story."

A comfortable repast in an adjoining restaurant, and a glass or two of sparkling Hungarian wine especially recommended by Herr Rieger, having somewhat invigorated his companion, the former handed a cigar to his guest, and lit another himself.

"I can't say much for our Viennese tobacco," he observed; "but you probably know something about government monopolies in France."

Victor thought of the inscrutable productions of Gros-Caillou, and answered emphatically in the affirmative.

"And now, my friend," continued the Doctor, "let us talk seriously. Since I first had the pleasure of making your acquaintance in the bookseller's shop near the Graben, I have often wondered that with your abilities you have not succeeded in turning them to some account."

"The usual ill luck, I suppose," replied Duhamel, "that a literary man and an artist—and unfortunately for me I am both—must expect when he has neither influence nor money to back him. I have tried everything in vain. Publishers with one accord declined even to look at my manuscripts, or proposed to print them at my expense. A commission I had solicited from government to copy a Murillo at the Louvre brought me the munificent offer of five hundred francs for a year's labour. At last, despairing of success in Paris, and having a special object in view, on the accomplishment of which my future happiness entirely depended, I came hither in the hope of discovering an old friend, a Viennese by birth, of whom I had lost sight for several years, and who would certainly have aided me by every means in his power. I was too late. On enquiry, I ascertained that after embarking his whole fortune in a speculation which had failed, he had left the country and emigrated to America. My scanty resources were nearly exhausted, and had not the bookseller, in whose shop I met you, kindly recommended me as a teacher of French to two or three of his lady customers, I should probably have starved. As it is, since the warm weather set in, my pupils have followed the example of the fashionable world and started off for

Ischl or the Tyrol. Until I can procure some other employment, I am absolutely penniless."

"Well, well," said Herr Rieger, "we must contrive to find something for you. But first, I am curious to know what the special object on which you are so intent can possibly be?"

"You will laugh at me," replied Victor, "when I tell you that in order to attain it I must be in possession, before the fifteenth of September, of no less than twenty thousand francs."

"Twenty thousand francs!" exclaimed the Doctor. "Nearly ten thousand Austrian florins! If I earn half that sum in a year, I consider myself exceptionally lucky. You must be mad to dream of such a thing."

"Mad or sane matters little now," sighed Duhamel, "as you will say when you have heard my story."

Herr Rieger listened attentively while the young man briefly narrated the result of the interview in the Rue Turenne, and his inability to fulfil the conditions on which depended his marriage with Claire.

"I see no way out of it," he said; "unless ——"

"Unless what?"

"Nothing. The idea is too absurd. And yet," he added after a moment's reflection, "it is just possible. Tell me: have you a good digestion?"

"Excellent. Why?"

"Never mind. Do you dislike pigeon?"

"On the contrary. But what has that to do with my position?"

"Everything. Listen to me, and don't interrupt. There is a Society in Vienna, of which I am a member, whose object is to investigate the truth or falsity of certain popular theories which are not based on established facts. One of these, namely, the physical impossibility of eating a pigeon every day for an entire month, has particularly engaged our attention; and, in consideration of the difficulty of the task, a prize of ten thousand florins has been offered by the Society to anyone who may succeed in accomplishing it. Many have already tried and failed in the attempt; the prize therefore remains unclaimed, and as oddly enough the amount is identical with the sum required by you, it struck me that you might be disposed to brave the ordeal. What say you? It is a last chance, but I warn you beforehand, a very poor one."

Victor stared at the speaker in amazement.

"Do I understand rightly," he enquired, "that after eating a pigeon every day for a month I am to receive ten thousand florins?"

"Undoubtedly."

"That of course settles the matter. Provided I get the money, it signifies little how. I should have preferred relying on my intellectual rather than on my digestive faculties, but as it seems that your Society considers the brain an organ of less importance than the stomach, I have no choice. When can I begin?"

"If you have quite made up your mind," replied Herr Rieger, "I will introduce you to our president to-day, and you can begin whenever it suits you."

"The sooner the better," said Victor.

The locality in which the Society's meetings were held was on the second floor of a spacious house in one of the principal streets of the city, and on the arrival of the Doctor and his companion, they were ushered into a waiting-room, where the president, Herr Professor Langenbart, a tall, thin personage of cadaverous aspect, shortly after joined them. Herr Rieger having briefly explained the motive of their coming, and presented Duhamel as a candidate for the pigeon prize, the professor brightened visibly, and courteously complimented the latter on his devotion to the cause of science.

"The task you are about to undertake, Herr Duhamel," he continued, "is a difficult one, as you may judge from the amount of recompense which, thanks to the ample resources of our Society, we are in a position to offer. No one has hitherto succeeded in the attempt; and it remains to be seen whether you are destined to be more fortunate, which I sincerely hope both for your sake and ours. Before, however, proceeding further, it is necessary that you should fully understand and agree to the following conditions approved by the Society, which I will now read to you."

"Firstly. The candidate for the prize engages, at a stated hour every day during an entire month, to eat a roasted pigeon, not a particle of which, the bones of course excepted, is to be left unconsumed. Two members of the committee will be present on each occasion, and will report progress every evening to the Society.

"Secondly. If the candidate succeeds in his undertaking, he will be entitled to receive ten thousand florins from the Society.

"Thirdly. Should he fail to complete the task, he cannot again compete for the prize.

"Fourthly. If he be prevented by illness from continuing the experiment, he will be allowed one hundred florins for medical expenses.

"Lastly. Should he unfortunately succumb to the ordeal, he will be buried at the cost of the Society, and the cause of his death will be inscribed in letters of gold on his tomb.

"These," concluded the professor, "are the terms of agreement. Are you disposed to accept them?"

Victor, who appeared disagreeably impressed rather than gratified by the final clause, replied curtly in the affirmative.

"In that case, Herr Duhamel," said the president, "if you have no objection, this interesting experiment may as well date from to-morrow, shall we say at three o'clock? My colleagues, Herr Commerzien-Rath Schulze and Herr Assessor Müller, will await you here at that hour, and I trust, enjoy the enviable privilege of ultimately recording your success."

"He will never get through it," muttered the professor, changing

his tone when Victor, by no means elated by the prospect before him, had left the room. Wants stamina, and looks as pale as a ghost."

"I am not so sure of that," said Herr Rieger. "He is terribly in love, and love they say, works miracles."

During the first few days of the enforced regimen, Victor, who had now become an inmate of the Doctor's house, and was consequently well cared for by his hospitable entertainer, accomplished his allotted task without difficulty. But before a fortnight had expired, his energy sensibly flagged, and it was only by a strong effort that he was able to persevere. The odour of the pigeon was inexpressibly repugnant to him; his eyes were bloodshot and his lips parched with fever, stimulated by the irritating nature of the food he forced himself mechanically to swallow. On the twenty-fifth day, he was hardly recognisable; and the president, alarmed by the unfavourable report of his two colleagues, decided that in order to avoid unnecessary risk, the experiment should continue in the house of Herr Rieger, he himself and the Doctor officiating as witnesses.

The latter was still confident of success. "He has a marvellous vitality," he said to Langenbart when they were alone, "and is determined not to give in. I sounded him on the subject this morning, and his answer was: 'When a man is three quarters of the way up a hill, he never rests until he has reached the top.' And depend upon it, reach it he will."

Herr Rieger's confidence was amply justified by the result. At the expiration of the month the last pigeon had been demolished and the prize fairly and indisputably won. The president and the Society were enraptured, and unanimously agreed that an additional honorarium of five hundred florins, together with a diploma commemorative of the event, should be presented to the successful candidate, who, meanwhile, lay in a critical state, a prey to fever and delirium.

It needed all the worthy medico's skill and care to arrest the progress of the malady, and nearly three weeks had elapsed before his patient was pronounced out of danger. The turning point, however, once reached, he gained strength rapidly; and, buoyed up by the cheering prospect of speedily realising his fondest hopes, impatiently counted the days which still separated him from Claire.

"How can I sufficiently thank you, Doctor, for all the kindness I have received at your hands?" he said one evening to his host, while the latter was busily engaged in superintending the preparations for the invalid's supper.

"By getting well as soon as possible," laughingly replied Herr Rieger. "I ought rather to thank you, for it is a glorious feather in my cap to have cured the winner of the pigeon prize!"

Two days before our hero's departure from Vienna, a general meeting of the members of the Society was convened in his honour; on which occasion the sum of ten thousand five hundred florins, together with a voluminous diploma, were formally delivered to him.

Professor Langenbart treated the assembly to a long discourse on the peculiar properties of the pigeon, considered as an article of food, in which he not unnaturally got out of his depth and floundered woefully; but wound up triumphantly by proposing, amid the enthusiastic cheers of all present, that Herr Duhamel should be elected an honorary member of the society. As a fitting conclusion to the proceedings, a serenade was given on the same evening beneath the Doctor's windows, with which the recipient of this flattering homage, completely exhausted by his previous exertions, would doubtless have willingly dispensed.

On the fourteenth of September, 1866, Victor arrived in Paris; and next morning, as nine o'clock struck, entered the well-known room in the Rue Turenne, where he found M. Mouron and his daughter sitting together, as he had left them a year ago.

"Tiens!" exclaimed the old gentleman, laying aside his newspaper. "Monsieur Victor Duhamel! I never thought you would come back."

"I told you he would, papa," said Claire, glancing fondly at her lover. "I was sure of it."

"Bless me, how thin and wan you look!" continued her father, struck with the young man's haggard air. "You have been working too hard."

"But to some purpose," answered Victor, drawing from his pocket a roll of bank-notes fresh from the money-changer's, and laying them on the table. "You see, I have kept my word."

"And I," said M. Mouron, when he had methodically counted the notes, "will keep mine. Claire is yours; but as I can't part with my little girl, we must make room for you here. As it happens, you are come in the very nick of time. My successor in the business is looking out for a partner, and with your twenty thousand francs and as much again from me, there will be a famous opening for a young couple. What say you?"

"That I am the happiest of men," cried Duhamel, cordially grasping the hand of his future father-in-law.

"Is Monsieur Victor quite sure," slyly whispered Claire, "that he does not regret his year's probation?"

"Regret it!" echoed her lover. "How can I, when it has brought me back to you!"

"But you wouldn't care to go through it again, I'll wager," said M. Mouron.

"Victor hesitated a moment before replying:

"Few things would daunt me," he said at length, whilst a shudder ran through him. "But even for such a prize," with a gallant look at Mademoiselle Claire, "I do not think I could a second time go through such an ordeal!"

CHARLES HERVEY.

THE MISSING RUBIES.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER IX.

"KNOW'ST THOU THE LAND?"

"LET me sing the first verse for you again," said Mr. Vordenberg. And in his mellow voice he sang, not loudly, but with a subdued intensity of feeling, the song that Mignon sang to Wilhelm Meister: "Know'st thou the land?"

Beatrice, as she stood and listened, felt the full power of Beethoven's immortal melody as she had never felt it before. To every note her heart throbbed; and the mystery and yearning of the words charmed, and yet pained, her strangely as they flowed from the singer's lips.

"Know'st thou it then? 'Tis there! 'Tis there!"

he sang, with such a passionate longing in his tones that the pupil absolutely trembled; and when, turning round at the end of the verse he met her eyes, they were glistening through tears.

"The land—where is it?" she asked involuntarily.

"Mignon's land? It was in Italy, you know," he said, looking at her attentively. "But a man who loves his country has but one land, and he sings of it always, in his heart and with his lips, in words like these. This is an exile's song, and that makes it so sadly sweet."

The last sentence fell from him with a sigh, his dark eyes were burning, but his face was as pale and calm as ever. An idea had flashed suddenly into her mind, waking up feelings of infinite compassion and sympathy, and her voice was tremulous and very gentle when she spoke again.

"Banishment is a terrible thing; but it is possible, I think, to be happy in the land of one's adoption if one can form new ties and make new friends."

"Ah! for some it is easy to make new friends," he answered; "but for others, life seems only filled with echoes of the past."

"But need it be so? Must it always be so?"

"Always," he said quietly. "You are not perhaps in the mood to sing this song to-night," he added, after a slight pause. "Let us choose something less thrilling—something that does not compel us to throw the heart into it. Where is the old-fashioned English song I heard you sing as you ran downstairs?"

"Drink to me only with thine eyes," she replied. "My grandfather used to ask for it very often. It reminds me of our cottage

sitting-room with its low ceiling and queer old furniture ; and I seem to hear Mrs. Milton playing the accompaniment on our jingling old piano, while grandpapa smoked his pipe and beat time. So that song is one of the echoes of *my* past, Mr. Vordenberg."

"You are fortunate," he said gravely, "if your past sends out no sadder echo than the music of an old song. Come, Miss Ward, you shall sing it to me, and I will play the accompaniment on my piano, which does not jingle."

And Beatrice sang, and was patiently corrected and instructed, and advised to practise her singing exercises. And meanwhile the sunset glow was fading over the housetops, and the cool breath of evening came creeping up the London street and stealing in through the open window.

She had glanced round the room with observing eyes when she had first entered. Musical instruments were plentiful ; there was a violin lying on a side-table, a guitar leaning against the wall, a harp in one corner, and a flute resting on the top of a pile of music. The well-filled book-shelves seemed to say that Mr. Vordenberg was a busy reader ; and several volumes, with Mudie's labels on their covers, showed that he liked to study the literature of the day. There were one or two tin boxes, an open desk with pen and paper lying ready for use, and a great bundle of newspapers ; but no valuable china, no bronzes, nor choice articles of bric-a-brac, and not a single photograph was to be seen.

"Did you have a happy day yesterday?" he suddenly asked, turning away from the piano. "Mrs. Milton said you were all going to Richmond."

"Yes ; I was very happy," said Beatrice, with a sort of shyness in her face that Mr. Vordenberg detected at once. "Richmond is so lovely, and the scenery is all new to me. Fond as I am getting to be of London, I found it delightful to see fields and trees once more. And such trees ! We had nothing like them at Silverdean."

"Trees !" Mr. Vordenberg repeated. "What would you think of the vast forests of oak and pine through which I used to roam in my youth ? There was no brushwood under our great trees, and one might wander at will about their huge trunks, and rest under their shade in the heat of noon. And in winter, when our moon was at the full, shedding a broad clear light upon the snow-covered branches, you could see the icicles gleam like diamond pendants in the wide woods ! And you might hear the merry sound of bells and laughing voices, when the sledges, with their gay trappings, came sweeping through those sparkling glades. A poor region it was, perhaps ; but there the young grew up happily and safely together, and became fair women and brave men."

"Where were these forests ?" Beatrice asked eagerly. "I would give the world to see them."

"Know'st thou the land ?" he said, with a light in the deep, dark

eyes that were fixed on hers. And she knew that, like the child Mignon, he would say no more than this.

At this point of their conversation—just as Vordenberg was studying her earnest face, and thinking how fresh and pure it was—there came a sharp knock at the door.

"Come in," he answered ; and Beatrice noticed the weary look that crossed his features as the door opened and a man entered.

The new-comer was spare and grey-haired, and had a general air of being half-crazed and half-starved. This was Miss Ward's first impression of him ; and she shrank a little timidly from his glance, which was not gentle and penetrating, like Vordenberg's, but angry and suspicious. He seemed, she fancied, to take her presence as a personal offence ; and she gathered up her music, and moved quickly away. But Mr. Vordenberg, with his graceful courtesy, attended her to the door, and received her simple "Good evening" as if it had been the parting salutation of a princess.

"Who is that girl, Casimir?" asked his visitor, in a sharp, irritable tone. He did not speak in English, and his tongue might have sounded harsh in English ears. But when Vordenberg answered him, in the same language, it became rich and soft and full of strength.

"I am teaching her to sing," he replied quietly. "She lives here, under the care of the people who keep the house ; and they are, as you know, good people, Michael."

"But what do you want with her, Casimir? It is not for you to seek the society of young women ; and these English girls have not hearts of gold as our women have. They are cold, and slow to feel, and full of selfish thoughts and frivolities. You should let them go their way, and devote yourself, with all your soul, to the great cause ; your country and her wrongs should never be absent from your mind, even for a single moment !"

He still spoke in his sharp, querulous tone ; and Vordenberg turned towards the open window, and looked thoughtfully at the rosy evening flush that was dying away above the house-tops.

"Of all men living," he answered mournfully, "I am the least likely to forget. Nay, if I strove to banish the past, the face of that young girl would bring it all back again in an instant. Have you not guessed the reason why I take so strong an interest in her, Michael? Her shape, her voice, her smile, do they not constantly recall to me the aspect of one who is now a saint in Heaven? This evening, while we were singing together, it seemed that Sofie must have sent me this Beatrice to sweeten the bitterness of my lonely life. Perhaps she sees, that sweet saint, that it is not good for a man always to be brooding over his sorrows in solitude."

He spoke in a musing tone, still looking away over the roofs, and standing near the open window. But his companion had begun to pace the floor with quick, uneven steps, swinging his arms,

and casting a wild look now and then at Vordenberg, as if he hated the unbroken calm of that sad face. And presently his words poured out fiercely, like a torrent let loose, and the veins on his forehead stood up like cords. In those few seconds of walking and thinking, he had lashed himself into one of the ungovernable rages which are the result of nursing old wrongs.

"You are becoming a dreamer, Casimir," he cried harshly. "Has the time come for beating the sword into a plough-share, and sitting down tamely to sing love-songs with strange women? What have you to do any more with the sweets of life? The only sweet that you can ever taste is that of vengeance."

But Vordenberg quietly shook his head.

"The Lord," he answered, "does not always see fit to deliver our enemies into our hand. He has taken from us our Fatherland, and it is not His will, Michael, that we should strive to win it back by assassinations and infernal machines. Let us wait, let us be patient. Even although the Muscovite triumph, his day of reckoning is sure to come."

"Out on you!" shouted Michael in a fury. "The fire is dead in your heart; you are sinking into a dream of ease, and false peace, and selfish security. I would that your noble father could rise from the dreary grave where he sleeps, and kindle the flame in your breast once more! Pillaged, hunted, banished, stripped of everything that you loved and prized, you are tamer than a beaten hound when you talk of waiting!"

He paused, exhausted by his own violence; and Vordenberg answered him with calm patience.

"The spirit of patriotism is not dead within me, Michael, but I know that the hour of our people has not yet come. My father (Heaven rest his soul!) would counsel resignation if he could speak to us in these present days. Think how many plots, carefully planned and warily kept, have ended in the utter ruin and misery of the plotters! There has been enough good blood shed vainly in our cause; why, then, should we waste any more? Believe me, my friend, that submission is the only course that is left to us now."

"It is a course that I will never take," muttered Michael, savagely.

"There is but one other road, Michael—the road that goes to Siberia; and it is already strewn thickly with the bodies of brave men."

Again Michael Stavieski began to pace the room, his features working convulsively, his eyes shining with a fierce light. Vordenberg's calmness irritated instead of soothing him.

"We ought never to dream of submission or resignation," he went on at last. "The true Pole knows not the words: for him they do not exist, and never have existed at all. In the life of the real patriot there is no rest—no ignoble content. I blame you Casimir; I shudder at you, because you can be contented!"

"My contentment is a very imperfect thing, Michael. If I am

now at peace it is because I can never suffer again as I suffered once. As to my joy, that, too, was done with long ago."

"Man, I hate your apathy; I would move Heaven and earth to kindle one spark of sacred fire in your heart! Look back on the past—behold again that familiar street in Warsaw where certain bold men had attempted the life of the detestable Berg! See the savage devils forcing their way into the house that contained *her*; see her face, that pure, lovely face, as it appeared for the last time at the window of an upper storey. Could men endure such a sight and live? Her clothes were torn, her bright hair hung all wild about her head, the blood was streaming from her fair neck; two soldiers—hell-hounds—forced her back into the room. And this was what the Muscovites called their divine vengeance!"

Once more he paused, breathless, and almost worn out; but this time there was no reply to his wild words.

Without a groan, without even a sigh, Vordenberg had dropped heavily on a couch that stood near the window. His head had fallen back on the cushion of the sofa; the eyes were closed, and the face, always pale, now wore the marble whiteness of death. Stavieski, impatient at his continued silence, drew near, and was horror-stricken by the aspect of that colourless face.

"I have killed him," muttered the unhappy man, wringing his hands. "I have killed my best friend! And yet, the saints know that I meant only to revive the dying flame; I did not dream that his heart was so weak! Casimir, my brother; what have I done?"

He lifted Vordenberg's hand, but it fell helplessly to his side again. There was no movement; no sign of life; and Michael, in an agony, looked round for some means of restoring consciousness. Springing to the side-board, he seized a carafe, and began to bathe the marble forehead with water, muttering incoherent lamentations the while.

Very gradually the look of life returned to the still features; the eyes slowly opened, the lips parted, and Vordenberg sighed softly. He looked up; shuddered from head to foot, and shrank away from Stavieski's eager touch.

"Sit down, Michael," he said feebly; "I am all right now."

But Michael still hovered over him, frightened and repentant; and his presence seemed to annoy and irritate his friend.

"Sit down." This time the tone was imperious. "I know I have fainted, but that is nothing; it has happened to me once or twice before. You will do well to go away, Michael; I do not want you here any longer to-night."

"Do not send me away," pleaded the other piteously. "Let me stay and watch by your side till morning! It is my fault, all my fault, that you are ill. I ——"

"Be silent," said Vordenberg sternly. "I am not ill, and I desire solitude. Go, Michael."

The man rose, humbled and subdued; the wild glitter had died

out of his eyes, and his haggard face had a strangely gentle look. He went to the door, and then lingered.

"Casimir," he said meekly, "if you will let me stay, I will not say another word about Poland. I will even try to forget the Muscovite. We will talk of music—of pictures—of this girl who has become your pupil—of any subject that does not give you pain. But if you send me from you now, I shall pace the street all night; I cannot rest; I cannot forgive myself for what I have done."

The blood was welling up again under Vordenberg's pale skin; the brightness had come back to his dark eyes; and although he still looked indescribably weary, the faintness had entirely passed away. He cast a compassionate glance at poor Stavieski (standing at the door with an abject bearing which contrasted strangely with his former demeanour), and then spoke in his usual quiet voice:

"My poor friend," he said, "I wish to Heaven that you could indeed forget the Muscovite, not only for an hour or two, but for the rest of your natural life! Stay with me a little longer if it will make you any happier, Michael; but I am tired, and I shall go early to bed."

Stavieski was greatly relieved by the kind permission; he came back to a seat near the window, with something of the manner of a big, rough sheep-dog just pardoned by its master, and gave an audible sigh of satisfaction. It was now eight o'clock, and Vordenberg touched the bell and asked for a lamp. The smart page who answered his summons looked a little inquisitively at the shabby visitor, and Stavieski was sullenly silent while the lad was in the room.

"Why does the boy steal glances at me?" he inquired, when the page had gone downstairs again. "He always stares—does he suspect me of anything, I wonder? He is young, but not too young to be a spy."

Vordenberg laughed slightly.

"Still harping on the old string, Michael," he said. "William is a good boy, as boys go; and he certainly has not the making of a spy in him. If he stares at you, my friend, it is because you don't look exactly like other people, that is all."

"Ah, I have changed more than you have, Casimir! And you are a handsome man still, although you are nearly fifty. Yet you, too, are altered; your hair and beard were nut brown when you escaped from Warsaw three-and-twenty years ago! But what am I saying? I promised, did I not, to talk no more about Poland?"

"You are incapable of keeping that promise, Michael; I release you from it," Vordenberg answered with a smile. "Go on, and talk of old days, if it pleases you."

"They were full of life and stir, those old days!" said Stavieski, gladly availing himself of the permission. "We kept up our hope to the last, and even when hope was gone, we had our pride left. Ah, Casimir, your escape was wonderful; I think you must bear a

charmed life! How marvellously you prospered in Vienna! And those Vordenbergs—how affectionately they received you and cherished you for your father's sake! And yet it is hard, cruelly hard, to remember all your losses."

"I have done with remembering them. My income amply suffices for all my needs."

"But there were the jewels—the jewels that your father prized so much, and your dead mother used to wear. Did you ever hear what became of them? Do you not know that the day after that diabolical outrage, a dragoon stood by the Church of the Cross and sold one string of pearls after another for two silver roubles each? Do you not know that——"

"Hush; my friend," said Vordenberg; "you are treading on forbidden ground. I did not give you leave to lash yourself into a fury again, when I told you that you might speak of old days."

Stavieski's eyes had begun to shine with a wild light once more, and his hands were trembling violently. But he made a strong effort to compose himself.

"Yes, yes; I understand you, Casimir," he replied. "I will not excite myself. See, I am quite calm now! Still there are certain things that one is always longing to say. Did I tell you that I had seen Worowski?"

Vordenberg fixed his eyes on the speaker with newly-aroused interest. "Where did Worowski come from?" he asked. "It is long since I have heard of him."

"He has come from Paris. Ah, how lean and hungry he looks!"

"They all do," murmured Vordenberg, sadly.

"Yes, that is too true. Well, he told me some news. You remember the Lorenski family who suffered with us in the good cause in 1861. One of them, a girl, was taken under the wing of the accursed Gradizoff, and trained up to be a spy. Think of it, Casimir—a Lorenski! She, the young traitress, lived with the Gradizoffs; and after the Count's death, she came to England with his English widow and daughter. But she did not stay with them very long; she went back to St. Petersburg, and from St. Petersburg she went to Paris. It was there that Worowski saw her, and kept a watch upon her doings as well as he could. We ought to know our enemies. She is very handsome and still young, but not quite so young as she appears to be. And she has taken the name of a rich man, old enough to be her grandfather; but whether she was really married to him, Worowski could not tell."

"Ah," said Vordenberg indifferently. "It does not matter to us if she takes fifty names! Poor child, I think she cannot have a single relation left. But about Worowski—is he indeed very poor?"

"Very poor," Michael repeated. "He is looking about for something to do, but it is hard to find work. I will help him as well as I can."

"You need help yourself." Vordenberg's glance was full of the

gentlest pity as it rested on the worn features before him. He rose, unlocked a desk, and put money into his friend's hand.

Stavieski murmured his thanks in a broken voice; and then, seeing that his benefactor looked pale and tired, he prepared to depart.

"Good night, Casimir," he said. "May the saints have you in their keeping!"

"And you too, Michael; and Worowski. One word more—do not talk too much with Worowski about our wrongs. And above all avoid any of those foolish plots which are sure to end in defeat. Good-night."

The door closed, and Vordenberg was at last alone.

For a little while, he sat with his elbows resting on the table and his forehead supported by his hands. Once or twice a strong shudder shook him from head to foot, and a deep groan broke the stillness of the room. He could not lose sight of that fearful vision which Stavieski had called up from the past.

At length, after many a bitter pang, the sharp agony began to subside, and he remembered that *her* suffering had been brief. The future, brightened by the glory of an intense faith, seemed to offer him that sublime guerdon which is the highest hope of a lonely soul. A pure spirit, free from every earthly fetter, was watching for his coming in an everlasting home.

He took a miniature out of his bosom, and looked long upon the sweet, girlish face of his dead love. And while he gazed, a light footstep was heard going up the stairs, and a fresh young voice sang softly:

"Know'st thou the land? 'Tis there! 'Tis there!"

CHAPTER X.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

THE rest of the summer glided peacefully away, bringing few changes to Beatrice and her friends.

In August, Harriet carried her off for three weeks to the sea-side, and brought her back again in freshest bloom. In September, they had one or two trips to Richmond. On these excursions Godwin Earle went with them, and there were quiet walks and talks under the old trees, and golden hours upon the river. The girl was wonderfully happy in these days; no one made love to her, but love was in the atmosphere that surrounded her. She felt no anxiety about the future now; it was enough for her that Godwin's eyes followed her constantly, and when he spoke to her his voice took its softest tone. Moreover, he seemed to have that power of knowing her likings and wishes that only love can give. Tact may do much; but affection alone can have the subtle gift of reading the desires that are unexpressed, and always reading them aright.

There were two men to whom she was daily becoming dearer and dearer. Godwin Earle, working hard in his City office, found the toil grow sweet under her influence, and knew that her little hand had guided him into the sunshine. Being a bright and eager spirit, she could scarcely help leading the darker and slower souls with whom she walked through life. And yet she led unconsciously, as many of the best leaders do.

The music lessons were going on steadily; but Beatrice sang better than she played. Hers was one of those full, fresh voices that seem to lend themselves best to old-fashioned songs—songs which are associated with the ripe and vigorous beauties of an older time.

"The lark now leaves his wat'ry nest," would peal out, clear and strong, from her red lips; and the notes made you think of morning skies and dewy fields, and a bird's early hymn to the rising day. Melancholy modern ballads she very seldom attempted; to her healthy taste they seemed sickly and tame. And Vordenberg encouraged her to sing "immortal verse wedded to immortal music."

Over and over again it has been proved that the gravest teachers and professors cannot give lessons to their fair pupils without a certain amount of danger. Let a man and woman come together in frequent and intimate association, and strong feelings spring up unawares. Abelard and Heloise; Cadenus and Vanessa; and scores of less celebrated names, bear witness to the perils of this peculiar relationship. Nor is that relationship much less dangerous when the master is old enough to be the father of his pupil. The paternal names, naturally caressing, prepares the girlish mind for the demonstrations of the lover.

If Beatrice had come to Vordenberg with an empty heart, there would have been a different ending to his life-story. But she came to him with all her thoughts and all her sympathies absorbed by another man.

Yet for Vordenberg she had sweet looks and grateful words; just such looks and words as a girl may give in all innocence to "her dear master," not knowing that to him they are a delicious poison. And he, finding his lonely life filled with tranquil sunshine, began to dream, almost unconsciously, of a renewal of his youth. In this bright girl his lost Sofie seemed to live again. Sometimes a sudden glance, a trick of speech, recalled her so distinctly, that he felt as if he loved the living woman for the sake of her resemblance to the dead.

In October, when the squares were full of yellow leaves and the first fogs had begun to blot out lingering sunbeams, Mrs. Wyville and her children came back to Bruton Street. And Beatrice set about her new work with a determination to make the best of it.

It was not, after all, such a terribly trying work as Harriet had expected. The duties were troublesome; but who does not know that even dust-grains are glorified in the sunlight? A happy heart

infuses something of its own joy into the most irksome tasks ; and Beatrice was too well contented with her lot to make much of its small nuisances. The children loved her ; their mother loaded her with tokens of goodwill ; and even Mrs. Milton was obliged to admit that things were turning out very well.

All the wheels ran so smoothly, and everyone was so perfectly satisfied, that Beatrice began to feel the old Puritan fear of too easy a path. She told Godwin Earle that if everything went on so evenly there would be a danger of spoiling the governess. "I shall never believe any more in the persecuted governess of modern fiction," she said. "Nobody tries to drag me into family rows ; I have made no enemies among the servants, and I have never had a single snub."

"But you forget that the novelist always introduces a grown-up son," said Godwin. "Or else the pupils have a widowed father. Whenever the governess is persecuted, it is because she is a dangerous siren. Mrs. Wyville's household happens to consist entirely of her own sex ; a fact which has a most tranquillising effect on my mind !"

"I'm sure I should know how to keep grown-up sons and widowers at a distance," she declared, putting on a haughty air to hide a blush. "They wouldn't dare to approach *me* !"

"Ah, child, I think there is nothing on earth that a man would not dare to win you !"

The month was December ; the time half-past four in the afternoon ; and the place was that brown-and-red sitting-room which Beatrice had always liked so well.

The pair were alone. Harriet had gone out on a Christmas shopping expedition, and was expected to return in a state of exhaustion, with heaps of parcels, in a cab. Mr. Milton was spending a few hours with a friend ; and Godwin, perfectly aware of the absence of these lawful guardians, had joyfully seized his opportunity. The tea-tray was on the table ; the fire blazed merrily, and the lamp-light brought out all the warm colours of the pretty room. Beatrice had laid aside mourning, although she still wore a black gown ; and there was a bright crimson bow at her neck. She sat near the tea-tray, looking so charmingly domestic, that Godwin suddenly lost his head, and said a great deal more than he had intended to say.

He had meant to wait until the three thousand pounds had been paid to the Countess Gradizoff, and he was free from the odious burden that was always pressing on his mind. When that load was cleared, away he could ask the Miltons to sanction his love, and openly propose to Beatrice. But, if a man means to delay his declarations till a convenient season, he is scarcely wise in seeking every chance of being alone with the girl he loves. And this quiet room, warm with lamp and fire, invested her with an atmosphere of homeliness which had an irresistible influence.

His last words had set her nerves quivering. But she sat quite

There were two men to whom she was daily becoming dearer and dearer. Godwin Earle, working hard in his City office, found the toil grow sweet under her influence, and knew that her little hand had guided him into the sunshine. Being a bright and eager spirit, she could scarcely help leading the darker and slower souls with whom she walked through life. And yet she led unconsciously, as many of the best leaders do.

The music lessons were going on steadily; but Beatrice sang better than she played. Hers was one of those full, fresh voices that seem to lend themselves best to old-fashioned songs—songs which are associated with the ripe and vigorous beauties of an older time.

"The lark now leaves his wat'ry nest," would peal out, clear and strong, from her red lips; and the notes made you think of morning skies and dewy fields, and a bird's early hymn to the rising day. Melancholy modern ballads she very seldom attempted; to her healthy taste they seemed sickly and tame. And Vordenberg encouraged her to sing "immortal verse wedded to immortal music."

Over and over again it has been proved that the gravest teachers and professors cannot give lessons to their fair pupils without a certain amount of danger. Let a man and woman come together in frequent and intimate association, and strong feelings spring up unawares. Abelard and Heloise; Cadenus and Vanessa; and scores of less celebrated names, bear witness to the perils of this peculiar relationship. Nor is that relationship much less dangerous when the master is old enough to be the father of his pupil. The paternal names, naturally caressing, prepares the girlish mind for the demonstrations of the lover.

If Beatrice had come to Vordenberg with an empty heart, there would have been a different ending to his life-story. But she came to him with all her thoughts and all her sympathies absorbed by another man.

Yet for Vordenberg she had sweet looks and grateful words; just such looks and words as a girl may give in all innocence to "her dear master," not knowing that to him they are a delicious poison. And he, finding his lonely life filled with tranquil sunshine, began to dream, almost unconsciously, of a renewal of his youth. In this bright girl his lost Sofie seemed to live again. Sometimes a sudden glance, a trick of speech, recalled her so distinctly, that he felt as if he loved the living woman for the sake of her resemblance to the dead.

In October, when the squares were full of yellow leaves and the first fogs had begun to blot out lingering sunbeams, Mrs. Wyville and her children came back to Bruton Street. And Beatrice set about her new work with a determination to make the best of it.

It was not, after all, such a terribly trying work as Harriet had expected. The duties were troublesome; but who does not know that even dust-grains are glorified in the sunlight? A happy heart

infuses something of its own joy into the most irksome tasks ; and Beatrice was too well contented with her lot to make much of its small nuisances. The children loved her ; their mother loaded her with tokens of goodwill ; and even Mrs. Milton was obliged to admit that things were turning out very well.

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still, and made no effort to break the silence that followed them. That was one of those momentous pauses which always precede a heart's revelation.

It was a very brief pause. Harriet's clock on the mantelpiece had only ticked away three seconds when an arm stole round Beatrice, and a well-known voice began to murmur old love words over and over again. A thousand times she had pictured a scene like this, and it must be confessed that she felt as if she had been through it all before. And yet it was a great deal sweeter than any dream.

"My darling," said Godwin, softly, "I meant to have waited a little longer—ever so much longer, perhaps! But you will forgive me, Beatrice? It was so hard to go on working without telling you how much I loved you. You are not angry with me for speaking?"

She was not angry, and she managed to let him know that she was not. With the first touch of her lips, the last sad thought of the past faded completely away. He could realise now that life is sometimes kind, that love is sometimes crowned, even in so uncertain a world as this.

So the quiet room in the London house was transformed, just then, into an earthly paradise; and Godwin gave himself up to the bliss of this second love. And in spite of all that has been sung and said about a first affection, it can scarcely be denied that the good wine is often kept till the end of the feast; and he who drinks it finds it richer and stronger than the earlier draught.

Even when his love for Alma Lindrick had been deepest, he had always known that she demanded many things besides that love. In his sanguine days, all those things had seemed easily attainable, and he had expected to lay honour and wealth at her feet. But later on, when the hopes had dwindled away one by one, and the world had turned its back on the disappointed man, he had felt the need of that love which is content with love alone.

"Ah, Beatrice," he said, "this makes amends for all that I have suffered. An hour like this is worth living for!"

"You were so tired of life when I knew you first," she whispered.

"Because I did not know what good things life could give. I did not know what it was to have won a heart like yours."

"But, Godwin, did you never win any other heart?"

"I thought I did; but I don't think so now."

"Was it—was she—did you see her that night when we went to the Lyceum?"

"Yes," he said, a little astonished at her quick perception.

"And again, when we dined at the Star and Garter?"

"Yes; I did not think you had noticed her, Beatrice. But it matters very little whether we meet her or not. I never loved her as I love you; and she could not love as you can love."

It was a perfect answer to any doubting questions that might arise

in her heart. And afterwards, when her faith was tried, these words lived eternally in her memory, and helped to strengthen and confirm her trust.

"I think we ought to tell the Miltons everything," she said, after a happy pause. "Harriet is really a mother to me, you know; and I hate concealments. Besides, it would hurt her if she were not perfectly trusted."

"You could not have a better guardian," Godwin answered warmly. "And this is a safe home for you until I can take you to another. I wish you would give up the teaching—I don't like it, Beatrice."

"Why not?" she asked, with a mischievous light in the blue eyes. "Are you a little bit proud? Or do you think there is any fear of the grown-up son appearing from some unknown quarter?"

"I *am* proud, I suppose. I want you to live a life of happy idleness until I can claim you."

"But idleness is never happy if it lasts too long. Dear Godwin, let me go on working in my own way, and promise not to set Harriet upon me. I know she would make me give up my pupils if she could."

"Then why not give them up, little woman? What makes you hold to your purpose with such fierce determination?"

"Do you really see anything fierce in me?" Her face was dimpling with fun. "You had better find out all my bad points before it is too late. Make haste and make some more awful discoveries."

He kissed her, and laughed with her; but he returned to his question.

"Well, I really love work of almost any kind," she said seriously. "And I don't think it would be good for a girl of my temperament to live in a lazy dream of delight. Besides, I am getting quite fond of Mrs. Wyville; she treats me as a friend, and I could hardly leave the poor children without a good excuse."

"I will give you a good excuse for leaving them as soon as I can," remarked Godwin with quiet resolution.

"And after all," she went on, "we may be glad, some day, that I went to that house in Bruton Street. I can't help feeling that it is well for me to know the Wyvilles."

There was such earnestness in her manner that Godwin did not press the matter. He let the subject drop, little thinking that the words she had just uttered would seem, later on, to have been something like a prophecy.

The sound of Harriet's latch-key reminded them that they must behave like ordinary people again. And when Mrs. Milton entered, followed by William, staggering under a load of parcels, Miss Ward was demurely filling the tea-cups, and Mr. Earle was standing on the hearth-rug with his back to the fire. They both looked so

perfectly easy and unconcerned that Harriet suspected nothing, and began at once to relate the wonderful history of her adventures.

"Of all the unpleasant duties that fall to my lot, an afternoon's shopping is the worst," she declared. "Just before Christmas, all the shop people go mad, and sell everything that you don't want and nothing that you do. And they mix up their trades in such a ridiculous way that one's brain gets quite confused. The draper entreats you to buy boots and shoes, cheap dolls, and pots and vases of all descriptions; the grocer bores you with packets of cards and good little books; and you come out of their doors with your head in a whirl. And altogether the Christmas things are so preposterous, and so dreadfully numerous, that I feel exactly like Alice after she had been through the looking-glass."

"Drink some tea, Harriet," said Beatrice; and Godwin dutifully handed a cup. "There is nothing like tea for clearing the brain. Now that I look at you, I see that you are not quite as trim as usual; your bonnet is a little awry, and you have the air of one who has passed through strange experiences."

"Oh, Beatrice, I hope there is nothing singular in my appearance!" cried Mrs. Milton in alarm. "I met our doctor at the door, and had a word or two with him; but it was too dark for my bonnet to be noticed. Ah, I see you are laughing at me, as usual! And now that I look at *you*, I find that you are not in the most perfect order. Perhaps it is the fashion to wear a red bow at the side of the neck!"

Beatrice dropped a spoon, and she and Godwin dived after it together, and were lost to sight under the table-cover. It was strange that a shining thing, such as a tea-spoon, should be so difficult to find in a well-lighted room; and Harriet wondered at the protracted search.

"If you are going to spend the evening in grovelling on the carpet," she said severely, "I shall ring for William."

They came up, rather hot and guilty-looking; Godwin with the spoon in his grasp; Mrs. Milton eyed them both with a lofty air of disapproval, and sipped her tea in silence.

Suddenly remembering that he had promised to dine with old Corder, Godwin quietly took his leave, and went out with such a contented face that Beatrice could not help looking after him with a smile. The two women were alone together; and Harriet was the first to break a rather ominous pause.

"I almost fancy, child," she remarked, "that *you* have been through the looking-glass this afternoon."

"Yes, Harriet, I have," said the girl, plucking up sudden spirit. "Don't begin to scold me; of course I meant to tell you all about it as soon as he was gone."

"He ought to have spoken to me first," said Mrs. Milton, bridling.

"He is going to speak to you by-and-bye. He—he thoroughly esteems and admires you, Harriet," replied Beatrice, diplomatically. "He says I could not have had a better guardian. And, oh, you dear old thing, we are both so very happy that you must forgive us!"

Rare tears were glittering in the deep blue eyes, and Mrs. Milton's heart told her that this happiness could not be quite complete without her sympathy. She had satisfied her sense of propriety by being dignified and severe; and now she came quickly down from her pedestal and held out loving arms to her favourite.

"May you be very, very happy, my darling," she said, tremulously. "Never was there a love-affair with a more romantic beginning! I was not quite sure whether it was going to be love or friendship; but Richard was right. He was always certain of the end."

"Do you think he will be pleased, Harriet? And Mr. Corder, what will *he* say?"

"I can answer for them both. They will be delighted. Does that satisfy you?"

"I am more than satisfied," said Beatrice, drawing a deep breath.

Harriet had untied her bonnet-strings, and thrown off her furred mantle, and was sitting in a low chair by the fire, looking oddly dishevelled and excited. Beatrice had drawn a low stool to her friend's feet, and was resting one arm on her lap.

"What a long sigh!" said Mrs. Milton, passing her hand fondly over the curly head.

"Harriet," the girl asked suddenly, "does happiness ever frighten you? Have you ever been afraid that all your good things were being poured out at once, and that there would be emptiness by-and-bye?"

"No, dear." The elder woman spoke thoughtfully. "My good things have come to me slowly, one by one; there never was an out-pouring. And—and I don't think I ever was as happy as you are now."

"Not as happy as I am! Is mine, then, an uncommon kind of joy?"

"No, child; there is, thank God, a great deal of such honest, natural joy in the world; and there would be more if people were true to their own hearts. But I had a chilly girlhood, and my relations always stood between me and the sunshine. They were harsh and cold, and nipped my feelings in the bud; and so I grew up thinking of myself as one of those 'Pale primroses that die unmarried.'" Late in life there came a sober kind of happiness and unexpected prosperity. That is my history, Beatrice; but it is not like yours."

"Not in the least like mine." The girl sighed again. "I wish I could talk to someone who had been just as wonderfully glad as I am now. I want to be told that great bliss is not always short-lived; that is all."

"Don't be afraid to rejoice. If God sends us good, He means us to enjoy it to the uttermost," said Harriet. "Why spoil a sweet draught by fearing that there may be bitterness at the bottom of the cup?"

Beatrice looked up with brightened eyes. Harriet's homely wisdom had done its work, and she was comforted.

"Do you know what time it is?" cried Mrs. Milton in a startled tone. "It is six o'clock, child, and dinner will be ready in half an hour. Here we are, sentimentalising by the fire, with rough hair and untidy gowns! And after dinner, there is your singing-lesson to come!"

Just then, Mr. Milton came in, saying that it was dark and bitterly cold out of doors; and Beatrice ran upstairs to her own room. But, instead of proceeding at once to brush her hair and set her dress to rights, she went to the window, and stood looking out into the thick gloom of the winter evening.

How many miseries were hidden under that foggy curtain of darkness! How many hearts, grown weary of the long struggle for existence, would give their last throb before the sun arose again! Her own happiness seemed to make her keenly alive to the unhappiness of others; and never had she felt a more passionate desire to comfort and help the crowd of sufferers around her. She was so safely sheltered—so fondly loved—what had she done to deserve such a wealth of blessedness?

She was turning away from the window, when the soft sound of a harp met her ears. A practised hand swept the strings, and drew out of them that sweet unearthly melody which always seems as if it drifted to us from another sphere. And then came the mellow voice that she knew so well:

"Love has met us on the road
When the heart is faint and sore;
Love, that lightens every load,
Gilds the path that lies before;
Will it go, or will it stay?
Who can say, ah, who can say?"

Love has made the roses grow
Where the cruel thorns were found;
Love has made the fountains flow
Over dry and thirsty ground;
Will it go, or will it stay?
Who can say, ah, who can say?"

Earth has many foes to love,
Watching with unkindly eyes;
And the saints that dwell above
Bid it spread its wings and rise;
Will it go, or will it stay?
Who can say, ah, who can say?"

"Oh, I wish the song had not such a doubting tone!" she thought, hastily brushing the tears from her eyes. "How can I dare to rejoice if those words are always echoing through my brain?"

But when, a few minutes later, she entered the sitting-room, and Mr. Milton met her with outstretched hands and smiling lips, the torturing fears were driven away.

"Harriet has told me the news," he said. "Heaven bless you, my child, and make you as happy as you deserve to be. I have a strong liking for Earle; he has a true heart, Beatrice."

Mrs. Milton came down to dinner still a little fluttered, and pressed Beatrice, with such tender anxiety, to eat something nice and keep up her strength and spirits, that the watchful William wondered what terrible trial was in store for the poor young lady. And Beatrice, in laughing at Harriet's little fidgety ways, almost forgot those vague forebodings that had shadowed her spirit a few minutes ago.

She was hardly in the right mood for taking a singing-lesson, but Mr. Vordenberg was waiting for her upstairs, and a certain subtle instinct told her that he would be pained if she failed to keep her appointment. Not that she had ever fancied his feeling for her was deeper than the affectionate interest which a middle-aged man may safely take in a young girl. But she knew that his life was lonely and sad, and suspected, too, that he was perpetually haunted by memories of a brighter past. And it was good for him, she thought, to be gently wiled away from sorrowful recollections.

Her light knock was instantly answered, and as he stood, holding the door open for her to enter, she was struck by the intensity of expression in his eyes. She had always thought Mr. Vordenberg a singularly handsome man, but to-night he was handsomer than she had ever known him yet. The long, oval face, with its delicate, but noble features, and soft dark eyes, was lit up with a subdued joy, which gave it an indescribable beauty. And although the hair, that lay in close-cropped curls over the fine head, was silver-white, he looked, this evening, wonderfully young.

"I have something against you, Mr. Vordenberg," said his pupil, half seriously and half gaily. "You have almost saddened me with your plaintive little song."

(To be continued.)



FIFTY YEARS.

This generation knows thee but in part,
 Beholding what thou art ;
 And not as we, who, as we backward gaze,
 Can see, through Time's soft haze,
 The fair girl-Sovereign of our early days.
 Who saw thee through the streets of London borne
 In triumph on thy Coronation morn,
 And heard the City musical with chimes
 That hymned thy bridal ; who, in later times,
 Rejoiced with thee on that auspicious day
 When the bright sun of May
 Saw thy loved Consort victory achieve,
 And Peace wear laurels War could never weave !

And time went on, and sunny skies grew dim,
 And trials thickened round thee, and round him.
 War, sickness, famine came the land to move
 From slothful ease to watchfulness and love ;
 Faction was won, and prejudice lived down ;
 Disaster turned to increase of renown.
 The Church awoke to labour and beseech
 For the lost thousands, drifting out of reach ;
 Stretching her tents to take the weary in,
 Storming the citadels of want and sin ;
 Luring the heathen to their Father's home
 By saintly lives, and deaths of martyrdom.
 While bold Invention, privileged at length
 To search the treasure-house of nature's strength,
 Launched the swift car that distance could not tire,
 Painted with sunbeams, wrote with heav'nly fire,
 And powers no chain could bind, linked peacefully with wire.

And still thy work was done,
 Though vanished, one by one,
 The friends and servants of thine opening reign.
 Prince, prelates, matchless hero, statesmen tried,
 All faded from thy side ;
 And one, more precious still,
 Sent, by the Father's Will,
 Thy youthful steps to guide, thy strength sustain—
 That Will in turn removed :
 Leaving the name beloved,
 That to thy people's hearts can never speak in vain.
 The sevenfold blessing of the Jubilee
 Abide for ever on thy Throne and thee ;
 And o'er thy sceptre brood, when needed most,
 The Dove of PENTECOST !

ANNA H. DRURY.

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RY.